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S E R M O N S

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the most Reverend

Dr. JOHN TILLOTSON,

L A T E

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

VOLUME *the* FIFTH.



L O N D O N :

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SERMONS

OF THE REV. J. W. ALLEN, D.D.,
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY JOHN WATSON, D.D.,
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

LATE

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.



S E R M O N LIX.

Of Constancy in the Profession of the
true Religion.

H E B. X. 23.

*Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without
wavering ; for he is faithful that promised.***I** Have already made entrance into these words, SERM.
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which I told you do contain in them,First, An exhortation “ to hold fast the profes- The se-
cond ser-
mon on
this text.
“ sion of our faith without wavering.”Secondly, An argument or encouragement there-
to ; “ because he is faithful that promised.” If we
continue stedfast and faithful to God, we shall find
him faithful to us, in making good all the pro-
mises which he hath made to us, whether of aid
and support, or of recompence and reward of our
fidelity to him.I have begun to handle the first part of the text,
viz. the apostle’s exhortation to Christians to be
constant and steady in their religion : “ Let us
“ hold fast the profession of our faith without wa-
“ vering.” The word ἀκλινῇ, which we render
without wavering, signifies inflexible and unmove-
able, not apt to waver and to be shaken with every
wind of contrary doctrine, nor by the blasts and
storms of persecution. And that we might the
better comprehend the full and true meaning of
this

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this exhortation, I propounded to do these two things.

I. To shew negatively, wherein this constancy and steadiness in the profession of the true religion doth not consist. And,

II. To shew positively, what is implied and intended here by the apostle, "in holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

I. To shew negatively, wherein this constancy and steadiness in the profession of the true religion doth not consist. This I spake to the last day; and shewed at large, that there are two things which are not contained and intended in this exhortation.

1. That Men should not have the liberty to examine their religion, and to enquire into the grounds and reasons of it; such I mean as are capable of this examination and enquiry; which some, I shewed, are not; as children, who while they are in that state, are only fit to learn and believe what is taught them by their parents and teachers: and likewise such grown persons, as either by the natural weakness of their faculties, or by some great disadvantage of education, are of a very low and mean capacity and improvement of understanding. These are to be consider'd as in the condition of children and learners; and therefore must of necessity trust and rely upon the judgment of others.

2. "This holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering," does not imply, that when men upon examination and enquiry are settled, as they think and verily believe, in the true religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any reason that can be offered against them. Both these principles I shewed to be unreasonable, and arguments of a bad cause and religion.

I shall

I shall now proceed to explain the meaning of SERM.
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this exhortation, “ to hold fast the profession of our
“ faith without wavering,” by shewing in the

Second place, what it is that is implied in the constant and steady profession of the true faith and religion: namely, that when upon due search and examination, we are fully satisfied, that it is the true religion which we have embraced, or as St. Peter expresses it, 1st epistle v. 12. “ that this is the “ true grace of God, wherein we stand ;” that then we should adhere stedfastly to it, and hold it fast, and not suffer it to be wrested from us, nor our selves to be moved from it, by any pretences or insinuations, or temptations whatsoever. For there is a great deal of difference between the confidence and stedfastness of an ignorant man, who hath never considered things, and inquired into the grounds of them ; and the assurance and settlement of one, who hath been well instructed in his religion, and hath taken pains to search and examine to the bottom, the grounds and reasons of what he holds and professeth to believe. The first is mere wilfulness and obstinacy. A man hath entertained, and drank in such principles of religion by education, or hath taken them up by chance ; but he hath no reason for them : and yet however he came by them, he is resolved to hold them fast, and not to part with them. The other is the resolution and constancy of a wise man. He hath embraced his religion upon good grounds, and he sees no reason to alter it ; and therefore is resolved to stick to it, and to hold fast the profession of it stedfastly to the end. And to this purpose there are many exhortations and cautions scatter’d up and down the writings of the holy apostles ; as that we should be “ stedfast and

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“ unmoveable, established in the truth, rooted and grounded in the faith,” and that we should “ hold fast that which is good,” and not suffer ourselves “ to be carried to and fro with every wind of doctrine, through the sleight of men, and the cunning craftiness of those that lye in wait to deceive ; that we should not be removed from him that hath called us unto the grace of CHRIST, unto another gospel ; that we should stand fast in one spirit and one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel, and be in nothing terrified by our adversaries ;” and that, if occasion be, we should “ contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints ;” and here in the text, that we should, “ hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” For the explaining of this, I shall do two things :

I. Consider what it is that we are to hold fast ; namely, “ the profession of our faith ;” and

II. How we are to hold it fast, or what is implied “ in holding fast the profession of our faith, without wavering.”

I. What it is that we are to hold fast ; namely, “ the profession of our faith ;” i. e. of the christian faith or religion : for, I told you before, that this profession or confession of our faith, or hope (as the word properly signifies) is an allusion to that profession of faith which was made by all those who were admitted members of the christian church by baptism ; of which the apostle makes mention immediately before the text, when he says, “ let us draw near in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water :” and then it follows, “ let us hold fast the profession of our faith with-
“ out

“out wavering.” The profession of faith which we made in our baptism, and which by the ancient fathers is called the rule of faith, and which is now contained in that which we call the apostle’s creed, and which is called by St. Paul, Rom. vi. 17. the “form of doctrine which was delivered to them;” i. e. to all Christians; and 2 Tim. i. 13. “the form of sound words; hold fast, faith he, the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in CHRIST JESUS;” and by St. Jude, “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

So that it is the first and ancient faith of the christian church, delivered to them by CHRIST and his apostles, which we are here exhorted to hold fast; the necessary and fundamental articles of the christian faith; and by consequence all those truths which have a necessary connexion with those articles, and are implied in them, and by plain consequence are to be deduced from them. It is not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men; nor the partial dictates and doctrines of any church, since the primitive times, which are not contained in the holy scriptures and the ancient creeds of the christian church, but have been since declared and imposed upon the christian world; though with never so confident a pretence of antiquity in the doctrines, and of infallibility in the proposers of them: these are no part of that faith which we are either to profess, or to hold fast; because we have no reason to admit the pretences, by virtue whereof those doctrines or practices are imposed; being able to make it good, and having effectually done it, that those doctrines are not of primitive antiquity; and that the church, which proposeth them, hath no more claim to infallibility,

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libility, than all other parts of the christian church; which since the apostles time is none at all.

In a word ; no other doctrines which are not sufficiently revealed in scripture, either in expresse terms or by plain and necessary consequence ; nor any rites of worship, nor matters of practice, which are not commanded in scripture, are to be esteemed any part of that faith in religion, the profession whereof the apostle here commands all Christians “ to hold fast “ without wavering ;” much less any doctrines or practices, which are repugnant to the word of God, and to the faith and practice of the first ages of Christianity ; of which kind I shall have occasion in my following discourse to instance in several particulars. In the mean time I shall only observe, that that faith and religion which we profess, and which by God’s grace we have ever held fast, is that which hath been acknowledged by all christian churches in all ages, to have been the ancient catholick and apostolick faith, and cannot (as to any part or tittle of it) be denied to be so, even by the church of Rome her self.

I proceed to the

II^d thing which I proposed to consider ; namely, how we are to hold fast the profession of our faith, or what is implied by the apostle in this exhortation, “ to hold fast the profession of our faith, without “ wavering.” And I think these following particulars may very well be supposed to be implied in it.

1. That we should hold fast the profession of our faith, against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support their confidence.

2. And much more against the confidence of men, contrary to scripture, and reason, and the common sense of mankind.

3. Against

3. Against all the temptations and terrors of the world. SERM.
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4. Against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to heaven upon easier terms in another religion.

5. Against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain profelytes to their own party and faction. I shall go over these with as much clearness and brevity as I can.

1. We should hold fast the profession of our faith, against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support that confidence. All religion is either natural or instituted. The rule of natural religion is the common reason of mankind: the rule of instituted religion is divine revelation, or the word of God; which all Christians before the council of Trent did agree to be contained in the holy scriptures. So that nothing can pretend to be religion, but what can be proved to be so, one or both of those ways; either by scripture or by reason, or by both. And how confident soever men may be of opinions destitute of this proof; any man that understands the grounds of religion, will without any more ado reject them, for want of this proof; and notwithstanding any pretended authority or infallibility of the church that imposeth them, will have no more consideration and regard of them, than of the confident dictates and assertions of any Enthusiast whatsoever; because there is no reason to have regard to any man's confidence, if the arguments and reasons which he brings bear no proportion to it. We see in experience that confidence is generally ill grounded, and is a kind of passion in the understanding, and is commonly made use of, like fury and force, to supply

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ply for the weakness and want of argument. If a man can prove what he says by good argument; there is no need of confidence to back and support it. We may at any time trust a plain and substantial reason, and leave it to make it's own way, and to bear out itself. But if the man's reasons and arguments be not good; his confidence adds nothing of real force to them, in the opinion of wise men, and tends only to it's own confusion. Arguments are like powder, which will carry and do execution according to it's true strength; and all the rest is but noise. And generally none are so much to be suspected of error, or a design to deceive, as those that pretend most confidently to inspiration and infallibility: as we see in all sorts of enthusiasts, who pretend to inspiration, although we have nothing but their own word for it; for they work no miracles, and all pretence to inspiration and infallibility, without miracle, whether it be in particular persons, or in whole churches, is enthusiastical; i. e. a pretence to inspiration without any proof of it.

And therefore St. Paul was not moved by the boasting and confidence of the false apostles; because they gave no proof and evidence of their divine inspiration and commission, as he had done; for which he appeals to the sense of men, whether he had not wrought great miracles; which the false apostles had not done, though they had the confidence to give out themselves to be apostles as well as he; 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12. "I am (says he) become a fool in glorying, ye have compelled me. And truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." And Rev. ii. 2. CHRIST there commends the church of Ephesus, because "she had
" tried

“ tried them, which said they were apostles, but
“ were not ; and had found them liars.” And as
we are not to believe every one that says he is an
apostle, so neither every one that pretends to be a
successor of the apostles, and to be endued with the
same spirit of infallibility that they were ; for these
also, when they are tried whether they be the suc-
cessors of the apostles or not, may be found liars.
And therefore St. John cautions Christians not to be-
lieve every spirit, (that is, every one that pretends
to divine inspiration and the spirit of God,) “ but
“ to try the spirits, whether they be of God ; be-
“ cause many false prophets are gone out into the
“ world,” 1 John iv. 1. And therefore the confi-
dence of men in this kind ought not to move us,
when their pretence to infallibility is destitute of the
proper proof and evidence of it, which is a power
of miracles ; and when their doctrines and practices
have neither the evidence of reason or scripture on
their side.

For instance ; that the church of Rome is the mo-
ther and mistress of all churches ; which is one of
the new articles of pope Pius the IVth's creed ; and
yet there is not one syllable in scripture tending to
this purpose. And in reason it cannot be, that any
but that which was the first christian church should
be the mother of all churches ; and that the church
of Rome certainly was not, and the church of Jeru-
salem undoubtedly was.

And then that the bishop of Rome, as successor
of St. Peter there, is the supreme and universal pastor
of CHRIST'S church by divine appointment, as he
assumes to himself ; and that it is necessary to salva-
tion, for every human creature to be subject to the
bishop of Rome, as is declared in their canon-law by

a constitution of pope Boniface the VIIIth, which constitution is confirmed in the last Lateran council; of all which there is not the least mention in scripture, nor any divine appointment to that purpose to be found there. And it is against reason, that all the world should be obliged to trudge to Rome for the decision of causes and differences, which in many and the most weighty matters are reserved to the decision of that see, and can be determined no where else. And against reason likewise it is to found this universal supremacy in his being successor of St. Peter; and to fix it in the bishop of Rome, rather than at Antioch; when it is certain, and granted by themselves, that St. Peter was first bishop of Antioch, and out of all question that he was bishop of Antioch; but not so, that he was bishop of Rome.

Nor is there any thing in scripture for the deliverance of souls out of purgatory by the prayers and masses of the living. The whole thing is groundless, and not agreeable to the constant suppositions of scripture concerning a future state. Nor is there any reason for it, besides that which is not fit to be given, the wealth and profit which it brings in.

The invocation and worship of the blessed virgin, and of all the saints departed, is destitute of all scripture-warrant or example, and confessed by themselves not to have been owned or practised in the three first ages of the church, because it looked too like the heathen idolatry; which deserves to be well considered by those, who pretend to derive their whole religion from CHRIST and his apostles by a continued and uninterrupted succession. And this practice is likewise destitute of all colour of reason; unless we be assured, that they hear our prayers in all places; which we cannot be, unless they be present in all places,

places, which they themselves do not believe; or that God doth some way or other reveal and make known to them the prayers which are made to them, which we cannot possibly be assured of, but by some revelation of God to that purpose; which we nowhere find, nor doth the church of Rome pretend to it.

But I proceed to the

2d Thing; namely, that we should much more “hold fast the profession of our faith” and religion, against the confidence of men, contrary to scripture, and reason, and the common sense of mankind. For these are the chief grounds of certainty, which we can have for or against any thing; and if these be clearly on our side, we ought not to be much moved by the confidence of men, concerning any doctrines or practices of religion, which are plainly contrary to these. If in points wherein we have this advantage on our side, we do not “hold fast the profession” of our religion; our error and folly are capable of no excuse. And this advantage we plainly have in several points and controversies betwixt us and the church of Rome.

As in the worship of images; which is as expressly and clearly forbidden in the second commandment, and that without any distinction, as any other thing is forbidden in the whole bible. And that it is so forbidden in this commandment, and that this commandment is still in force among Christians, was the universal sense of the ancient christian church.

Prayers and the service of God in an unknown tongue are directly contrary to the very nature and end of religious worship, which ought to be a reasonable service; which it cannot be, if it be not directed by our understandings, and accompanied
with

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with our hearts and affections: but if it be performed in an unknown tongue, our understanding can have no part in it; and if we do not understand it, it cannot move our affections. And this likewise is plainly contrary to scripture; namely, to a large discourse of St. Paul's, almost throughout a whole chapter, where he purposely sets himself to shew the unprofitableness and gross absurdity of praying, or celebrating any other part of religious worship in an unknown tongue. If any part of our religion had been half so clearly condemned in scripture, as this is (which yet is the constant and general practice of the church of Rome) we must have "lain down in our shame, and confusion would have covered us;" and we must either have rejected the authority of the bible, or have renounced that point of our religion, whatever it had been; though it had been dear to us as our right hand, and our right eye, we must upon such plain evidence of scripture against it, have "cut it off, and plucked it out, and cast it from us."

The like may be said of locking up the scriptures from the people in an unknown tongue, contrary to the command of the scriptures themselves, and to the great end and design of Almighty God in the writing and publishing of them; and contrary to the perpetual exhortations and councils of all the ancient fathers of the christian church for a great many ages, not one excepted. They are hardly more frequent, and copious, and earnest in any argument; than in persuading people of all ranks and conditions, to the constant and careful reading of the holy scriptures. And contrary to the common reason and sense of mankind. For what should men be persuaded to be acquainted withal; if not with that
which

which is the great instrument of our salvation? That book which was written on purpose to reveal and convey to men the knowledge of God, and of his will, and their duty? What should men be allowed to know; if not that which is the best and most effectual means, to direct and bring them to heaven, or turn them from sin, and to preserve them from eternal misery? When our SAVIOUR would represent the best and most effectual means of bringing men to happiness, and saving them from the eternal torments of hell, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he brings in Abraham, giving the best advice he could to the rich man who was in hell, concerning his brethren that were upon earth, how they might prevent their coming into that place of torment; and he directs them to the scriptures, as the best and most effectual means to that purpose: "They have (says he) Moses and the prophets: let them hear them."

Now if in the church of God among the Jews, the same course had been taken, that is now in the church of Rome; the rich man might, and in all reason ought to have replied, "Nay, father Abraham; but they have not Moses and the prophets, nor are they permitted to read them in a language that they can understand; and therefore this advice is of no use to them:" and then he might with reason have press'd him, as he did, that "one might be sent to them from the dead, to testify unto them." But it appears that Abraham was very positive and peremptory in this advice; and that he prefers the knowledge of the scriptures, to any other way and means, that could be thought of; and that if this had not its effect to persuade men to repentance, and to preserve them from

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from hell, he did not know any thing else that was so likely to do it : for he concludes, " If they hear " not Moses and the prophets ; neither will they " be persuaded though one rose from the dead." And this is the conclusion of the parable ; which plainly shews, what was the main scope and design of our SAVIOUR in it ; namely, to recommend to us the use of the holy scriptures, as the best and most effectual means, which the wisdom of God hath provided for the salvation of mankind.

And now any man would be apt to think, that the declared judgment of our SAVIOUR in the case should go a great way ; even with the most infallible church in the world. However this we must say, that it is in truth a very hard case, to which the church of Rome hath reduced men ; that it will neither allow them salvation out of their church, nor the best and most effectual means of salvation, when they are in it. I might say much more upon this head ; but this I hope may be sufficient.

The next instance shall be in the doctrine of transubstantiation ; which is contrary to the scriptures, which after consecration so frequently call the elements bread and wine ; and which, without reason or necessity, puts an absurd and impossible sense upon those words of our SAVIOUR, " This is my " body ;" which do no more prove transubstantiation ; than those words, " This cup is the new " testament," do prove that the material cup which was used in the sacrament, was substantially changed into the new testament ; and no more, than those texts which affirm God to have eyes, and ears, and hands, do prove that he really hath so. But besides the contrariety of this doctrine to scripture, nothing can be more repugnant to reason. It is so
big

big with contradictions, and so surfeited of impossibilities, that it would be endless to reckon them up. And besides all this, it plainly contradicts the clear and constant evidence of four of our five senses; which whoever contradicts, undermines the foundation of all certainty.

And then the communion in one kind is plainly contrary to our SAVIOUR's institution of the sacrament in both kinds; as they themselves acknowledge. And therefore the council of Constance, being sensible of this, was forced to decree it with an express *non obstante* to the Institution of CHRIST, and the practice of the apostles and the primitive church. And their doctrine of concomitancy (as if the blood were in the flesh, and together with it) will not help the matter: because in the sacrament CHRIST's body is represented as broken, and pierced, and exhausted, and drained of it's blood; and his blood is represented as shed and poured out; so that one kind can by no means contain and exhibit both.

The next instance is, the repetition of CHRIST's propitiatory sacrifice in the mass, so often as that is celebrated: against all reason; because the sacrifice of CHRIST once offered upon the cross, was a full and perfect propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and therefore ought not, because it needs not, to be again repeated for that end, in any manner whatsoever. And it is directly contrary to the main scope of a great part of this epistle to the Hebrews, which shews the excellency of the gospel above the law in this respect, that the expiatory sacrifice of the gospel was offered once for all; whereas the sacrifices of the law were perpetually repeat-

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ed. Chap. vii. 27. speaking of CHRIST; "who needs not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifices; first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once when he offered up himself." Chap. ix. 26. "But once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself: and as it is appointed for all men once to die, so CHRIST was once offered to bear the sins of many." And chap. x. 10. "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of JESUS CHRIST once for all:" and verse the 12th, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of GOD." And verse the 14th, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." There cannot be plainer texts for any thing in the bible, than that this propitiatory sacrifice was never to be repeated.

And whereas they say, that the sacrifice of the mass is an unbloody sacrifice: this, instead of bringing them off, doth but intangle the matter more. For if blood be offered in the sacrifice of the mass, how is it an unbloody sacrifice? What can be more bloody than blood? And if blood be not offered, how is it propitiatory? Since the apostle lays it down for a certain rule, that "without shedding of blood, there is no remission" of sins: i. e. there can be no propitiation for the sins of the living or the dead, which the church of Rome affirms there is.

I might have added one or two instances more; and then should have proceeded to shew, in the third place, that we are to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," against all the temptations

tations and terrors of the world; which is more especially and principally here intended by the apostle in this exhortation.

But I shall proceed no farther at present.

S E R M O N L X.

Of Constancy in the Profession of the true Religion.

H E B. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.

IN these words, I have told you, are contained First, an exhortation to “hold fast the profession of our faith, or hope, without wavering.”

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The third
sermon on
this text.

Secondly, an argument or encouragement thereunto; “because he is faithful that promised.” I am yet upon the first of these; the exhortation to Christians, to be constant and steady in the profession of their religion: “let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.” And that we might the better comprehend the true and full meaning of this exhortation, I shewed,

First, negatively, what is not meant and intended by it. And I mentioned these two particulars.

1. The apostle doth not hereby intend, that those who are capable of enquiring into, and examining

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the grounds of their religion, should not have the liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when upon due enquiry and examination, men are settled, as they think and verily believe, in the true faith and religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any reason that can be offered against their present persuasion. Both these I shewed to be unreasonable, and arguments of a bad cause and religion: and therefore neither of them can be intended by the apostle in this exhortation.

Secondly, I proceeded positively to explain the meaning of this exhortation. And to this purpose I proposed,

I. To consider what it is, that we are to hold fast, viz. the confession or "profession of our faith." The ancient christian faith, of which every Christian makes profession in his baptism: for of that the apostle here speaks, as appears by the context; not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men, nor the impious dictates and doctrines of any church, not contained in the holy scriptures, imposed upon the christian church; though with never so confident a pretence of the antiquity of the doctrines proposed, or of the infallibility of the proposers of them. And then I proceeded in the

II. Place, to shew how we are "to hold fast the "profession of our faith without wavering." And I mentioned these following particulars, as probably implied in the apostle's exhortation.

1. That we should "hold fast the profession of "our faith," against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support their confidence.

2. And much more against the confidence of men, against scripture and reason, and the common sense of mankind.

3. Against

3. Against all the temptations and terrors of the world.

4. Against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to heaven upon easier terms, in another religion.

5. Against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain proselytes to their party and faction.

1. We are "to hold fast the profession of our faith," against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support their confidence. And of this I gave several instances. As in the pretence of the church of Rome to infallibility, without any proof or evidence of it, either by scripture or miracles: I mean such miracles, as are sufficiently attested. For as for their legends, since the wisest among themselves give no credit to them, I hope, they do not expect that we should believe them, or be moved by them. And then their pretence that the church of Rome is the mother and mistress of all churches; which is now made an article of their creed. And that the bishop of Rome, as successor of St. Peter there, is by divine appointment the supreme and universal pastor of CHRIST's church. And that it is necessary to salvation, for every human creature to be subject to him. And lastly, their invocation and worship of the blessed virgin, and saints departed; without any warrant or example of any such thing, either in scripture, or in the practice of the first ages of the christian religion; and without sufficient ground to believe that they hear the prayers which are put up to them.

2. Much more are we "to hold fast the profession of our faith," against the confidence of men,

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contrary to scripture and reason and the common sense of mankind. And here I instanced in the worship of images; the locking up of the scriptures from the people; and celebrating the publick prayers and service of God in an unknown tongue; in their doctrine of transubstantiation, their communion in one kind, and their daily repetition in the sacrifice of the mass, of the propitiatory sacrifice of CHRIST; which was offered "once for all," and is of eternal virtue and efficacy, and therefore ought not, because it needs not, like Jewish sacrifices under the law, to be repeated.

To these instances, which I have already spoken to, I shall add one or two more; as namely, that to the due administration of the sacraments, an intention in the minister at least to do what the church does, is requisite. This is expressly defined, and under an anathema upon all that shall say otherwise, by the council of Trent, sess. the seventh, can. 11th; which is to make the validity and virtue of the sacraments to depend upon the intention of the priest or minister. So that if in the administration of baptism, he do not intend to baptize the party he pretends to baptize, then it is no baptism, and consequently the person baptized is not made a member of CHRIST's church; nor is any grace or special benefit conferred upon him; nor is he a Christian. So likewise in the sacrament of the LORD's supper, if the priest do not intend to consecrate the host, then is it no sacrament; and they that receive it, receive no benefit by it; and (which according to their opinion is a dreadful consequence) by the words of consecration, there is no change made of the elements into the body and blood of CHRIST, and consequently they that give adoration to the sacrament

ment in such cases, worship bread and wine, for God; which is idolatry. And so likewise in their sacrament of penance, though the priest pronounce the words of absolution; yet if he do not intend to absolve the penitent, though he be never so truly penitent, and God on his part is ready to forgive him; yet if the priest do not intend to do so, there is nothing done, and the man is still in his sin. So likewise in ordination (which is another of their sacraments) if the bishop do not intend to ordain the man; he is no priest, and all that he does as a priest afterwards, either in administration of baptism, or the LORD's supper, or the absolution of penitents, all is vain, and of no effect. Nay, in marriage (which they will needs have to be a sacrament too) if the intention of the priest be wanting; there is nothing done, the contract is null'd, and they that are so married do really live in adultery; though they do not know it, nor have any suspicion of it.

Now this is contrary to scripture and the whole tenour of the gospel, which promiseth the benefit and efficacy of the sacraments, to all those that perform the conditions of the covenant which are required on their parts, and declares forgiveness of sins to those who confess them to God, and truly repent of them.

And there is not the least intimation given in the bible, that the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments does depend upon the intention of him that administers them; or that the forgiveness of sins is suspended upon the intention or absolution of the priest; but only upon the sincere resolution of the penitent. And surely nothing can be more absurd, and contrary to reason, than that when men have performed all the conditions which the gospel requires;

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quires ; yet they should notwithstanding this be deprived of all the blessings and benefits which God hath promised, and intends to confer upon them ; because the priest hath not the same intention. So that when a man hath done all that he can “ to “ work out his own salvation,” he shall be never the nearer ; only for want of that which is wholly out of his power ; the right intention of the priest.

Besides, that after all their boasts of the safe condition of men in their church, and the most certain and infallible means of salvation to be had in it ; this one principle (that the intention of the priest is necessary to the validity and virtue of the sacraments) puts the salvation of men upon the greatest hazard and uncertainty ; and such as it is impossible for any man either to discover or prevent, unless he had some certain way to know the heart and intention of the priest. For upon these terms, who can know whether any man be a priest, and really ordained ; or not ? Nay, whether he be a Christian, and have been truly baptized ; or not ? And consequently whether any of his administrations be valid, and we have any benefit and advantage by them ? Because all this depends upon the knowledge of that, which we neither do nor can know.

So that when a man hath conscientiously done all that God requires of any man, to make him capable of salvation ; yet without any fault of his, the want of intention in an idle-minded man may frustrate all : and though the man hath been baptized, and do truly believe the gospel, and hath sincerely repented of his sins, and lived a most holy life ; yet all this may signify nothing, and after all he may be no Christian ; because his baptism was invalid :

and

and all the promises of God to the means of salvation which his goodness and wisdom hath prescribed, may be of no efficacy; if the priest do not intend in the administration of the sacraments to do that which God and the church intend.

Now if this be true; there is certainly no church in the world, in which the salvation of men runs so many hazards; and yet all this hazard and uncertainty has it's rise, from a scholastical point, which is directly contrary to all the notions of mankind concerning the goodness of God, and to the clear reason of the thing, and to the constant tenor of the gospel; and which was never asserted by any of the ancient fathers; much less defined by any council before that of Trent: so that it is a doctrine new and heedless, and in the necessary consequences of it unreasonable and absurd to the utmost degree.

The last instance I shall mention, is their rule of faith. The rule of faith universally received and acknowledged by the christian church in all ages, before the council of Trent, was the word of God, contained in the canonical books of holy scripture; which were therefore by the church called canonical, because they were the rule of faith and manners, of the doctrines to be believed, and the duties to be practised by all Christians. But when the errors and corruptions of the Romish church were grown to the height, and the pope and his council at Trent were resolved not to retrench and reform them, they saw it necessary to enlarge and lengthen out their rule; because the ancient rule of the holy scriptures would by no means reach several of the doctrines and practices of that church, which they were resolved to maintain and make good by one means or other; as namely, the doctrine of transubstantiation; of

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purgatory; and of the seven sacraments: and the practice of the worship of saints, and images; of the scriptures, and the service of GOD in an unknown tongue; of indulgences; and the communion in one kind; and several other superstitious practices in use among them.

Now to enlarge their rule to the best advantage for the justification of these doctrines and practices, they took these two ways.

First, they have added to the canonical books of the old testament, which were received by the Jewish church, (to whom were committed the oracles of GOD) I say to these they have added several apocryphal books not warranted by divine inspiration, because they were written after prophecy and divine inspiration was ceased in the Jewish church; Malachi being the last of their prophets, according to the general tradition of that church. But because the addition of these books did not make a rule of faith and practice large enough for their purpose; in imitation of the Jews, in the time of the greatest confusion and degeneracy of that church, they added in the

Second place to their books of scripture, which they call the written word, an unwritten word, which they call oral tradition from CHRIST and his apostles; which they declare to be of equal authority with the holy scriptures themselves; and that it ought to be received with the same pious veneration and affection: of which traditions, they being the keepers and judges, they may extend them to what they please, and having them in their own breasts, they may declare whatever they have a mind to, to have been a constant and universal tradition of their church; though it is evident to common sense, that
nothing

nothing can be more uncertain, and more liable to alteration and mistake, than tradition, at the distance of so many ages, brought down by word of mouth, without writing, and passing through so many hands. He that can think these to be of equal certainty and authority with what is delivered by writing, and brought down by books, undertakes the defence of a strange paradox, viz. that general rumour and report of things said and done 1500 years ago, is of equal authority and credit with a record, and a written history.

By which proceeding of the council of Trent, concerning the rule of faith and practice; it is very evident that they had no mind to bring their faith to the ancient rule, the holy scriptures. That they knew could not be done; and therefore they were resolved to fit their rule to their faith. And this foundation being laid in their first decree, all the rest would afterwards go on very smoothly. For do but give men the making of their rule, and they can make good any thing by it. And accordingly the council of Trent having thus fixt and fitted a rule to their own purpose; in the conclusion of that decree, they give the world fair warning, upon what grounds, and in what ways they intend to proceed in their following decrees of practice, and definitions of faith. *Omnes itaque intelligent, quo ordine & via ipsa synodus post jactum fidei confessionis fundamentum sit progressura,* &c. “ Be it known therefore to all men, in what “ order and way the synod, after having laid this “ foundation of the confession of faith, will proceed; “ and what testimonies and proofs she chiefly in- “ tends to make use of, for the confirmation of doc- “ trines, and reformation of manners in the church.” And no doubt all men do see very plainly to what

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purpose this foundation is laid of so large a rule of faith. And this being admitted, how easy is it for them to confirm and prove whatever doctrines and practices they have a mind to establish?

But if this be a new, and another foundation, than that which the great author and founder of our religion hath laid and built his church upon, viz. "the foundation of the prophets and apostles;" it is no matter what they build upon it. And if they go about to prove any thing by the new parts of this rule; by the apocryphal books which they have added to the ancient canon of the scriptures, brought down to us by the general tradition of the christian church; and by their pretended unwritten traditions: we do with reason reject this kind of proof, and desire them first to prove their rule, before they pretend to prove any thing by it: for we protest against this rule as never declared and owned by the christian church, nor proceeded upon by the ancient fathers of the church, nor by any council whatsoever, before the council of Trent.

In vain then doth the church of Rome vaunt itself of the antiquity of their faith and religion; when the very foundation and rule of it is but of yesterday; a new thing never before known or heard of in the christian world: whereas the foundation and rule of our religion is the word of God, contained in the holy scriptures; to which Christians in all ages have appealed, as the only rule of faith and life.

I proceed now to the

3. Thing I proposed, viz. that we are "to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," against all the temptations and terrors of the world. And this seems more especially and principally to be here intended by the apostle in this exhortation.

I shall

I shall first speak of the temptations of the world. And they are chiefly these two; the temptation of fashion and example: and of worldly interest and advantage.

1. Of fashion and example. This in truth and reality is no strong argument; and yet in experience and effect it is often found to be very powerful. It is frequently seen, that this hath many times too great an influence upon weak and foolish minds. Men are apt to be carried down with the stream, and to follow a multitude in that which is evil. But more especially men are prone to be swayed by great examples; and to bend themselves to such an obsequiousness to their superiors and betters, that in compliance with them, they are ready not only to change their affection to persons and things, as they do; but even their judgment also; and that in the greatest and weightiest matters, even in matters of religion, and the great concernments of another world. But this surely is an argument of a poor and mean spirit, and of a weak understanding, which leans upon the judgment of another, and is in truth the lowest degree of servility, that a reasonable creature can stoop too; and even beneath that of a slave, who in the midst of his chains and fetters doth still retain the freedom of his mind and judgment.

But I need not to urge this upon considerate persons, who know better how to value their duty and obligation to God, than to be tempted to do any thing contrary thereto, merely in compliance with fashion and example. There are some things in religion so very plain, that a wise and good man would stand alone in the belief and practice of them, and not be moved in the least by the contrary example of the whole world. It was a brave resolution of Joshua; though

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though all men should forsake the God of Israel, and run aside to other gods, yet he would not do it, Joshua xxiv. 15. "If it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD; chuse you this day whom you will serve: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." It was well resolved of Peter, if he had not been too confident of his own strength, when he said to our SAVIOUR, "though all men forsake thee, yet will not I."

2. Another sort of temptation, and which is commonly more powerful than example, is worldly interest and advantage. This is a mighty bait to a great part of mankind, and apt to work very strongly upon the necessities of some, and upon the covetousness and ambition of others. Some men are tempted by necessity, which many times makes them do ugly and reproachful things, and like Esau, "for a morsel of meat to sell their birth-right, and blessing." Covetousness tempts others to be of that religion which gives them the prospect of the greatest earthly advantage, either for the increasing or securing of their estates. When they find that they "cannot serve God and Mammon;" they will "forsake the one, and cleave to the other." This was one of the great temptations to many in the primitive times, and a frequent cause of apostasy from the faith; an eager desire of riches, and too great a value for them; as St. Paul observes, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. "But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred, or been seduced from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

“rows.” This was the temptation which drew off Demas from his religion; as St. Paul tells us, 2 Tim. iv. 10. “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.”

Ambition is likewise a great temptation to proud and aspiring minds, and makes many men false to their religion, when they find it a hindrance to their preferment; and they are easily persuaded, that that is the best religion, which is attended with the greatest worldly advantages, and will raise them to the highest dignity. The devil understood very well the force of this temptation, when he set upon our SAVIOUR, and therefore reserved it for the last assault. “He shewed him all the kingdoms of the earth, and the glory of them; and said to him, all this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” And when he saw this would not prevail, he gave him over in despair, and left him. But though this be a very dazzling temptation; yet there are considerations of that weight to be set over against it, from the nature of religion, and the infinite concernment of it to our immortal souls, as is sufficient to quench this fiery dart of the devil, and to put all the temptations of this world out of countenance, and to render all the riches and glory of it, in comparison of the eternal happiness and misery of the other world, but as the very small dust upon the balance. What temptation of this world can stand against that argument of our SAVIOUR, if it be seriously weighed and considered; “what is a man profited; if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” If he would consider things impartially, and weigh them in a just and equal balance; the things which concern our bodies, and
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this present life, are of no consideration, in comparison of the great and vast concernments of our immortal souls, and the happy or miserable condition of our bodies and souls to all eternity.

And religion is a matter of this vast concernment; and therefore not to be bargained away and parted with by us for the greatest things this world can offer. There is no greater sign of a fordid spirit, than to put a high value upon things of little worth; and no greater mark of folly, than to make an equal bargain, to part with things of greatest price, for a slender and trifling consideration: as if a man of great fortune and estate, should sell the inheritance of it for a picture; which when he hath it, will not perhaps yield so much as will maintain him for one year. The folly is so much the greater in things of infinitely greater value; as for a man to quit God and religion, to sell the truth and his soul, and to part with his everlasting inheritance, for a convenient service for a good customer, and some present advantage in his trade and profession, or indeed for any condition which the foolish language of this world calls a high place, or a great preferment. The things which these men part with upon these cheap terms, God, and his truth, and religion, are to those who understand themselves, and the just value of their immortal souls, things of inestimable worth, and not to be parted with by a considerate man for any price that this world can bid. And those who are to be bought out of their religion, upon such low terms, and so easily parted from it, it is much to be feared that they have little or no religion to hold fast.

Secondly, "As we are to hold fast the profession
" of our faith without wavering," against the temptations

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tations and allurements of this world ; so likewise against the terrors of it.

Fear is a passion of great force ; and if men be not very resolute and constant, will be apt to stagger them, and “ to move them from their stedfastness.” And therefore when the case of suffering and persecution for the truth happens, we had need “ to hold fast the profession of our faith.” Our SAVIOUR in the parable of the sower tells us, that there were many “ that heard the word, and with joy received it : but when persecution and tribulation arose because of the word, presently they “ were offended.”

And though, blessed be God, this be not now our case : yet there was a time when it was the general case of Christians, in the first beginning of Christianity, and for several ages after, though with some intermission and intervals of ease. It was then a general rule, and the common expectation of Christians that through many tribulations they must enter into the kingdom of GOD ; and that if any man will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, he must suffer persecution. And in several ages since those primitive times, the sincere professors of religion have, in divers places, been exposed to most grievous sufferings and persecutions for the truth. And even at this day, in several places, the faithful servants of GOD are exercised with the sharpest and forest trials that perhaps were ever heard of in any age ; and for the sake of GOD, and the constant profession of his true religion, “ are tormented and “ killed all the day long, and are accounted as “ sheep for the slaughter.” It is their hard lot to be called to these cruel and bitter sufferings ; and our happy opportunity to be called upon for their relief ;

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relief; those of them, I mean, that have escaped that terrible storm and tempest, and have taken refuge and sanctuary here among us, and out of his majesty's great humanity and goodness, are by his publick letters recommended to the charity of the whole nation, by the name of distressed protestants.

Let us consider how much easier our lot and our duty is, than theirs; as much as it is easier to compassionate the sufferings, and to relieve the distressed of others, than to be such sufferers, and in such distress our selves. Let us make their case our own; and then we our selves will be the best judges, how it is fit for us to demean our selves towards them. and to what degree we ought to extend our charity and compassion to them. Let us put on their case and circumstances; and suppose that we were the sufferers, and had fled to them for refuge: the same pity and commiseration, the same tender regard and consideration of our sad case, the same liberal and effectual relief that we should desire and expect, and be glad to have shewn and afforded to our selves, let us give to them; and then I am sure they will want no fitting comfort and support from us.

We enjoy (blessed be the goodness of God to us) great peace and plenty, and freedom from evil and suffering: and surely one of the best means, to have these blessings continued to us, and our tranquillity prolonged, is, to consider and relieve those who want the blessings which we enjoy; and the readiest way to provoke God to deprive us of these blessings, is, to shut up the bowels of our compassion from our distressed brethren. God can easily change the scene, and make our sufferings, if not in the same kind, yet in one kind or other equal

to theirs, and then we shall “ remember the afflictions of Joseph,” and say as his brethren did, when they fell into trouble, “ We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.”

God alone knows what storms the devil may yet raise in the world, before the end of it: And therefore it concerns all Christians, in all times and places, who have taken upon them the profession of CHRIST’S religion, to consider well before-hand, and to calculate the dangers and sufferings it may expose them to, and to arm our selves with resolution and patience against the fiercest assaults of temptation; considering the shortness of all temporal afflictions and sufferings, in comparison of the eternal and glorious reward of them; and the lightness of them too, in comparison of the endless and intolerable torments of another world; to which every man exposeth himself, who forsakes GOD, and renounceth his truth, and wounds his conscience, to avoid temporal sufferings.

And though fear in many cases, especially if it be of death and extreme sufferings, be a great excuse for several actions; because it may, *cadere in constantem virum*, happen to a resolute man: yet in this case, of renouncing our religion (unless it be very sudden and surprising, out of which a man recovers himself when he comes to himself (as St. Peter did; or the suffering be so extreme, as to put a man besides himself for the time, so as to make him say or do any thing;) I say in this case of renouncing GOD and his truth, GOD will not admit fear for a just excuse of our apostasy; which, if it

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be unrepented of, (and the scripture speaks of repentance in that case as very difficult) will be our ruin. And the reason is; because God has given us such fair warning of it, that we may be prepared for it, in the resolution of our minds: and we enter into religion upon these terms, with a professed expectation of suffering, and a firm purpose to lay down our lives for the truth, if God shall call us to it. "If any man will be my disciple," says our LORD, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me:" and again, "He that loveth life itself more than me, is not worthy of me: and if any man be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this unfaithful generation; of him will I be ashamed before my Father and the holy angels."

And therefore to master and subdue this fear, our SAVIOUR hath propounded great objects of terror to us, and a danger infinitely more to be dreaded, which every man runs himself wilfully upon, who shall quit the profession of his religion, to avoid temporal sufferings; Luke xii. 4, 5. "Fear not them that can kill the body, but after that have nothing that they can do: but I will tell you whom you shall fear. Fear him, who after he hath killed, can destroy both body and soul in hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." And to this dreadful hazard every man exposeth himself, who, for the fear of men, ventures thus to offend God. These are "the fearful and unbelievers" spoken of by St. John, "who shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Thus you see how we are to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," against
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all temptations and terrors of this world. I should now have proceeded to the next particular ; namely, that we are to “ hold fast the profession of our “ faith,” against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes, of getting to heaven upon easier terms, in some other church and religion.

But this I shall not now enter upon.

S E R M O N L X I.

Of Constancy in the Profession of the true Religion.

H E B. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ; for he is faithful that promised.

I N these words, I have told you, are contained these two parts :

First, an exhortation to “ hold fast the profession “ of our faith, without wavering.”

Secondly, an argument or encouragement thereto ; “ because he is faithful that promised.” I am yet upon the

First of these ; the exhortation to Christians, to be constant and steady in the profession of their religion : “ let us hold fast the profession of our faith “ without wavering.” And that we might the better

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ter comprehend the true and full meaning of this exhortation, I shewed,

First, negatively, what is not meant and intended by it. And I mentioned these two particulars.

1. The apostle doth not hereby intend, that those who are capable of enquiring into, and examining the grounds and reasons of their religion, should not have the liberty to do it. Nor,

2. That when upon due enquiry and examination, men are settled, as they think and verily believe, in the true faith and religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any reason that can be offered against their present persuasion: for reason, when it is fairly offered, is always to be heard. I proceeded in the

Second place, positively to explain the meaning of this exhortation. And to this purpose I proposed to consider,

First, what it is, that we are to hold fast, viz. the confession or "profession of our faith." The ancient christian faith, which every Christian makes profession of in his baptism: not the doubtful and uncertain traditions of men, nor the imperious dictates and doctrines of any church (which are not contained in the holy scriptures) imposed upon the christian world, though with never so confident a pretence of the antiquity of the doctrines, or of the infallibility of the proposers of them. And then I proceeded, in the

Second place, to shew how we are "to hold fast" "the profession of our faith without wavering;" and I mentioned these following particulars, as probably implied and comprehended in the apostle's exhortation.

I. That

1. That we should "hold fast the profession of our faith" against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support that confidence.

2. And much more against the confidence of men, contrary to plain scripture and reason, and the common sense of mankind; under both which heads I gave several instances of doctrines and practices imposed with great confidence upon the world, some without, and others plainly against scripture, and reason, and the common sense of mankind.

3. Against all the temptations and terrors of the world; the temptations of fashion and example, and of worldly interest and advantage; and against the terrors of persecution and suffering for the truth. Thus far I have gone. I shall now proceed to the two other particulars which remain to be spoken to.

4. We are to "hold fast the profession of our faith," against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to heaven upon easier terms, in some other church and religion. God hath plainly declared to us in the holy scriptures, upon what terms and conditions we may obtain eternal life and happiness, and what will certainly exclude us from it; that "except we repent," (i. e.) without true contrition for our sins, and forsaking of them, "we shall perish; that without holiness no man shall see the LORD;" that "no fornicator, or adulterer, or idolater, or covetous person, nor any one that lives in the practice of such sins, shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of GOD or CHRIST." There is as great and unpassable a gulf fixed between heaven and a wicked man; as there is betwixt heaven and hell. And when men have done all they can to debauch

bauch and corrupt the christian doctrine, it is impossible to reconcile a wicked life with any reasonable and well-grounded hopes of happiness in another world. No church hath that privilege, to save a man upon any other terms, than those which our blessed SAVIOUR hath declared in his holy gospel. All religions are equal in this ; that a bad man can be saved in none of them.

The church of Rome pretends their church and religion to be the only safe and sure way to salvation ; and yet, if their doctrine be true, concerning the intention of the priest, (and if it be not, they are much to blame in making it an article of their faith) I say, if it be true, that the intention of the priest is necessary to the validity and virtue of the sacraments ; then there is no religion in the world, that runs the salvation of men upon more and greater hazards and uncertainties, and such as by no care and diligence of man in “ working out his own salvation,” are to be avoided and prevented.

As for the easier terms of salvation which they offer to men, they signify nothing, if they be not able to make them good ; which no man can reasonably believe they can do, that hath read the bible, and doth in any good measure understand the nature of God, and the design of religion. For instance ; that after a long course of a most lewd and flagitious life, a man may be reconciled to God, and have his sins forgiven at the last gasp, upon confession of them to the priest, with that imperfect degree of contrition for them, which they call attrition, together with the absolution of the priest.

Now attrition is a trouble for sin, merely for fear of the punishment of it. And this together with confession, and the absolution of the priest, without
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any hatred of sin for the evil and contrariety of it to the holy nature and law of God, and without the least spark of love to God, will do the sinner's business, and put him into a state of grace and salvation, without any other grace or disposition for salvation, but only the fear of hell and damnation. This, I confess, is easy: but the great difficulty is, to believe it to be true. And certainly, no man that ever seriously considered the nature of God and religion, can ever be persuaded to build the hopes of his salvation upon such a quick-sand. The absolution of all the priests in the world will not procure the forgiveness of God for any man, that is not disposed for his mercy by such a repentance, as the gospel requires; which I am sure is very different from that which is required by the council of Trent.

They that offer heaven to men upon so very large and loose terms, give great cause to suspect, that they will never make good their offer; the terms are so unreasonably cheap and easy, that there must be some fraud and false dealing. And on the other hand, nothing ought to recommend our religion more to a wise and considerate man, than that the terms of salvation which we propose to men, viz. faith and repentance, and a sincere obedience to the precepts of the gospel, manifested in the tenure of a holy and virtuous life, are not only perfectly agreeable to the plain and constant declaration of holy scripture; but do likewise naturally tend to engage men most effectually to a good life, and thereby to make them "meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." And therefore every body ought to be afraid of a religion, which makes such lavish offers of salvation, and to take heed how he ventures his soul upon them. For if,

after all the hopes that are given of salvation upon such and such terms, the sinner doth really miscarry and miss of heaven; it is but very ill comfort to him, to be put into a fool's paradise, for a minute or two before he leaves the world, and the next moment after to find himself in the place of torments. I proceed to the

5. And last particular I mentioned, as implied in the exhortation here in the text, viz. that we should "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to gain proselytes to their party and faction. To this purpose there are several cautions given by our blessed SAVIOUR and his apostles. Matth. xxiv. 4. "Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, and shall deceive many." Eph. iv. 14. "That ye henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men: ἐν τῇ κρυψίᾳ, (the word signifies the cunning of gamesters at dice;) by the sleight of men, and the cunning craftiness whereby they lye in wait to deceive." And chap. v. 6. "Let no man deceive you with vain words." Col. ii. 8. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit;" that is, by sophistry and vain reasoning, under a pretence of philosophy. Heb. xiii. 9. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." 2 Pet. iii. 17. "Beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." And this caution is enforced by an express prediction of a great apostasy which should happen in the christian church, by which many should be seduced, by pre-
tence

tence of miracles, and by several arts of deceit and falshood. This apostasy St. Paul expressly foretels, 2 Thes. ii. 1, 2, 3. "We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit" (that is, by pretence to inspiration) "nor by word" (or message) "nor by letter as from us, as that the day of CHRIST is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." And after a particular description of him, he adds, ver. 9. "Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and in all deceitfulness of unrighteousness in them that perish." From all which he concludes, ver. 15. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast."

The particular nature and kind of this apostasy the same apostle describes more fully, 1 Tim. iv, 1, 2, 3. "Now the spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall apostatize from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy," (i. e. under a great pretence of sanctity, spreading their pernicious errors) "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." This is a very lively and pat description of that great apostasy in the christian church, which began in the western part of it, and hath spread itself far and wide. For there the spirit of error and falshood has prevailed, under an hypocritical pretence of their being the only true church and true Christians in the world. There marriage, and several sorts of meats, are forbidden to several rank and orders of men. All the difficulty is, what is here

meant by “doctrines of devils;” and these certainly can be no other than doctrines tending to idolatry, which the scripture every where doth in a particular manner ascribe to the devil, as the inventor and great promoter of it. And this is very much confirmed by what we find added in some ancient Greek copies in this text, which runs thus; “in the latter times “some shall apostatize from the faith; for they shall “worship the dead, as some also in Israel worshipped.” And then it follows, “giving heed to “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” So that the particular kind of idolatry, into which some part of the christian church should apostatize, is here pointed at; that they should worship souls departed, or the spirits of dead men; which was part of the heathen idolatry, into which the people of Israel did frequently relapse. So that the spirit of God doth here foretel such an apostasy in some part of the christian church as the people of Israel were guilty of, in falling into the heathen idolatry. “They shall be “worshippers of the dead, as the Israelites also “were.”

And this is the great and dangerous seduction which the Christians are so much cautioned against in the new testament, and charged “to hold fast the “profession of the faith” against the cunning arts and insinuations of seducing spirits; not but (as I said before) that we are always to have an ear open to reason, and to be ready to hearken and to yield to that, whenever it is fairly proposed: but to be overreached and rooked out of one’s religion, by little sophistical arts and tricks, is childish and silly. After we are, upon due trial and examination of the grounds of our religion, settled and established in it, we ought not to suffer ourselves to be removed from it, by the
groundless

groundless pretences of confident people to infallibility, and to be practised upon by cunning men, who lye at catch to make profelytes to their party. This is to be “ like children tossed to and fro, and “ carried about with every wind of doctrine.”

And we ought to be the more careful of our selves ; because there never was any time, wherein seducing spirits were more bold and busy to pervert men from the truth. Against these we should hold fast our religion, as a man would do his money in a croud. It passeth in the world for a great mark of folly, when a man and his money are soon parted : but it is a sign of much greater folly, for a man easily to quit his religion ; especially to be caught by some such gross methods, as the seducers I am speaking of commonly use, and which lye so very open to suspicion ; such as ill-designing men are wont to practise upon a young heir, when they have insinuated themselves into his company, to make a prey of him. They charge him to tell no body in what company he hath been ; nor to ask the counsel and advice of his friends concerning what they have been persuading him to ; because they for their own interest will be sure to dissuade him from it. Just thus do these seducers practise upon weak people. They charge them not to acquaint their minister, with whom they have been ; nor what discourse they have had about religion ; nor what books have been put into their hands ; because then, all their kind design and intention towards them will be defeated. But above all, they must be sure to read no books on the other side, because they are no competent judges of points of faith ; and this reading on both sides will rather confound than clear their understandings. They tell them, that they have stated the matter
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truly, and would not for all the world deceive them; and they may easily perceive, by their earnest application to them, that nothing but charity, and a passionate desire of the salvation of their souls, makes them take all these pains with them. But this is so gross a way of proceeding, that any man of common understanding must needs discern by this kind treatment, that these men can have no honest design upon them.

To come then to a more particular consideration of the arts and methods which they use (I mean particularly those of the church of Rome) in making profelytes to their religion: as,

1. In allowing them to be very competent and sufficient judges for themselves, in the choice of their church and religion, (that is, which is the true church and religion, in which alone salvation is to be had) and yet telling them at the same time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular doctrines, and points of faith and practice; but for these, they must rely upon the judgment of an infallible church, when they are in it; otherwise they will certainly run into damnable errors and mistakes above these things.

And they must of necessity allow them to be sufficient judges for themselves in the choice of their religion; as will be evident, by considering in what method they proceed with their intended profelyte.

They propose to him to change his church and his religion, because he is in the wrong; and they will shew him a better, and such a one as is the only true one, and in which alone salvation is to be had. To persuade him hereto, they offer him some reasons and arguments, or give him books to read, containing arguments to move him to make this change,

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to satisfy him of the reasonableness, and to convince him of the necessity of it.

Now by this way of proceeding (and they can take no other) they do, whether they will or no, make the person, whom they are endeavouring to convert, a judge for himself, which church and religion is best; that which they would have him embrace and come over to, or that which they would persuade him to forsake. For to what end else do they offer him reasons and arguments to persuade him to leave our church, and to come over to theirs; but that he may consider the force and weight of them; and having considered them, may judge whether they be of force sufficient to over-rule him to make this change? So that as unwilling as they are to make particular persons judge for themselves about points of faith, and about the sense of scripture confirming those points (because this is to leave every man to his own private spirit and fancy and giddy brain) yet they are compelled by necessity, and against their own principles, to allow a man in this case of chusing his religion, to be a judge of the reasons and arguments which they offer to induce him thereto. So that, whether they will or no, they must permit him to be a judge for himself for this once, but not to make a practice of it, or to pretend this privilege ever after: for in acknowledgment of this great favour, of being permitted to judge for himself this once (which they do unwillingly grant him, and upon mere necessity) he is for ever after to resign up his judgment to the church. And though this liberty be allowed *pro hac vice*, and properly to serve a turn, i. e. in order to the changing of his religion; yet he is to understand, that he is no fit and competent judge of particular points of faith; these he must

must all learn from the true church when he is in it, and take them upon her authority, and in so doing he shall do very prudently, because she is infallible, and cannot be deceived; but he may.

But is there any sense in all this, that a man should be very fit and able to judge of that which they esteem the main and fundamental point of all, namely, which is the true church and religion; and of the reasons and arguments whereby they pretend to demonstrate it; and of the true meaning of those texts of scripture, whereby they pretend to prove theirs to be the only true church: and yet should be wholly unable to judge of particular points of faith; or of the true sense of any texts of scripture that can be produced for the proof of those points?

Is it so very prudent, in all the particular points of faith, for a man to rely upon the judgment of the church, because she is infallible; and not to trust his own judgment about them, because he is fallible, and may be deceived? And is it prudent likewise for this man to trust his own judgment in the main business of all; namely, which is the true church and religion; concerning which he is as fallible in his judgment, and as liable to be deceived, as in the particular points? And if he be mistaken in the main point, they must grant his mistake to be fatal; because his sincerity, as to all the rest, depends upon it. This is a great mystery and riddle, that every particular man should have so sufficient a judgment as to this main and fundamental business, which is the true church and religion; and should have no judgment at all about particular points, fit to be trusted and relied upon: As if there were a certain judgment and prudence, *quoad hoc*; and as if all mens understandings were so framed, as to be very judi-

judicious and discerning in this main point of religion; but to be weak, and dangerous, and blind, as to all particular points: or, as if a man might have a very good judgment, and be fit to be trusted and relied upon, before he come into their church; but from the very moment he enters into it, his judgment were quite lost and good for nothing: for this in effect and by interpretation they say, when they allow a man to be very able to judge which is the true church and religion; but so soon as he hath discovered and embraced that, to have no judgment of his own afterwards of any point of religion whatsoever; and a very tempting argument it is to any man that hath judgment, to enter into that church.

2. Another art they use with their intended profelyte, in order to his making a right choice of his religion, is to caution him, to hear and read only the arguments and books which are on one side. But now admitting their designed profelyte to be just such a judge, and so far they will allow him to be, and no farther, viz. which is the true church; but to have no fitness and ability at all to judge of particular points of faith: yet methinks they put a very odd condition, and untoward restraint upon this judge, in telling him, (as they certainly use to do those whom they would pervert) that he must have no discourse, nor read any books, but only on that side which they would gain him to; because that is the way to perplex and confound him, so that he shall never be able to come to a clear judgment and resolution in the matter. But will any man admit this way of proceeding in a temporal case? This is just as if in a cause of the greatest consequence, the counsel on one side should go about to persuade the judge, that it is only fit to hear what he hath to say

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in the case; that he will open it very plainly, and state the matter in difference so clearly and impartially, and bring such strong reasons and proofs for what he says, that he shall not need to hear any thing on the other side, but may proceed to judgment without any more ado: but if when the matter is thus laid before him so plainly, and is even ripe for judgment, he will trouble himself needlessly to hear the other side; this will cast them back where they first began, and bring the matter to an endless wrangling, and so confound and puzzle his understanding, that he shall never be able to pass any clear judgment in the cause.

What think we would a judge say to such a bold and senseless pleader? The case is the same, and the absurdity every whit as gross and palpable, in pressing any man to make a judgment in a matter which infinitely more concerns him, upon hearing only the reasons and arguments on one side.

3. Another art which they use in making protestants, is to possess them, that there is but one thing that they are mainly concern'd to enquire into, and that is this; since there is but one true catholick church of CHRIST upon earth, out of which there is no salvation to be had; which that true church is? and when they have found that out, that will teach them in a most infallible way the true faith and religion, and all things that are necessary to be believed or done by them, in order to their salvation; so that they have nothing to do, but to satisfy themselves in this single enquiry; which is the true catholick church of CHRIST? This is the *unum necessarium*, the one thing necessary; and when they have found out this, and are satisfied about it, they need to enquire no farther, this church will fully instruct

struct and satisfy them in all other things. And this I cannot deny to be a very artificial way of proceeding, and to serve their purpose very well; for they have these two great advantages by it.

1. That it makes the work short, and saves them a great deal of labour, by bringing the whole business to one single enquiry: and when they have gained this point, that this single question is all that they need to be satisfied in; then they have nothing to do, but to ply and puzzle the man with their motives of credibility, and marks of the true church, and to shew, as well as they can, how these marks agree to their church, and are all to be found in it, and in no other; and to set out to the best advantage the glorious privileges of their church, the miraculous things that have been and are still daily done in it, and the innumerable multitude of their saints and martyrs; and if these general things take and sink into them, their work is in effect done.

2. Another great advantage they have by it, is, that by bringing them to this method, they divert and keep them off from the many objections against their church and religion, namely, the errors and corruptions which we charge them withal. For this is the thing they are afraid of, and will by no means be brought to; to vindicate and make good their innovations in faith and practice, so plainly in many things contrary to scripture, and to the faith and practice of the primitive church; as the doctrines of transubstantiation, of purgatory, the pope's supremacy, of the infallibility of their church, of their seven sacraments instituted by CHRIST, and of the intention of the priest being necessary to the validity and virtue of the sacraments: and then several of their practices; as of the worship of images, of the

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invocation of angels and saints, of the service of God and the scriptures in an unknown tongue, and the communion in one kind; and several other things, so plainly contrary to the scriptures, and the practice and usage of the primitive church, that almost the meanest capacity may easily be made sensible and convinced of it. These are fore places, which they desire not to have touched, and therefore they use all possible artifice to keep men at a distance from them; partly because the particular discussion of them is tedious, and it requires more than ordinary skill, to say any thing that is tenable for them, and so to paint and varnish them over, as to hide the corruptions and deformities of them; but chiefly because they are conscious to themselves, that as in all these points they are upon the defensive, so they are also upon very great disadvantages; and therefore to avoid, if it be possible, being troubled with them, they have devised this shorter, and easier, and more convenient way of making profelytes.

Not that they are always able to keep themselves thus within their trenches; but are sometimes, whether they will or no, drawn out to encounter some of these objections: but they rid themselves of them as soon, and as dexterously as they can, by telling those that make them, that they will hereafter give them full satisfaction to all these matters, when they are gotten over the first and main enquiry; which is the true church? For if they can keep them to this point, and gain them to it, they can deal with them more easily in the rest: for when they can once swallow this principle, that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church, and consequently, as they have told them all along, infallible; this infallibility of the church once entertained will cover a multitude

multitude of particular errors and mistakes ; and will very much help to cure the weakness and defects of some particular doctrines and practices, and at last to silence and over-rule all objections against them. So that the benefit and advantage of this method is visibly and at first sight very great ; and therefore no wonder they are so steady and constant to it, and do so obstinately insist upon it. But how convenient soever it be to them ; it is, I am sure, very unreasonable in itself ; and that upon these accounts.

1. Because the true church doth not constitute and make the true christian faith and doctrine ; but it is the true christian faith and doctrine, the profession whereof makes the true church ; and therefore in reason and order of nature, the first enquiry must be ; what is the true faith and doctrine of CHRIST, which by him was delivered to the apostles, and by them published and made known to the world, and by their writings transmitted and conveyed down to us ? And this being found, every society of Christians which holds this doctrine, is a true part of the catholick church ; and all the Christians throughout the world that agree in this doctrine, are the one true catholick church.

2. The enquiry about the true church can have no issue, even according to their own way of proceeding, without a due examination of the particular doctrines and practices of that church, the communion whereof they would persuade a man to embrace. We will admit at present this to be the first enquiry ; which is the true church ? let us now see in what way they manage this, to gain men over to their church. They tell them that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church of CHRIST. The true of this assertion we will particularly examine afterwards, when

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we come to consider the next step of their method in dealing with their converts. At present I shall only take notice in the general, what way they take to prove this assertion; namely, that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church; and that is, by the notes and marks of the true church, which they call their motives of credibility; because by these they design to persuade them, that the church of Rome is the one true catholick church. I shall not now reckon up all the notes and marks which they give of the true church; but only observe, that one of their principal marks of the true church is this; that the faith and doctrine of it be agreeable to the doctrine of the primitive and apostolick church, (i. e.) to the doctrine delivered by our SAVIOUR and his apostles: and this Bellarmine makes one of the marks of the true church. And they must unavoidably make it so; because the true faith and doctrine of CHRIST, is that which indeed constitutes the true church. But if this be an essential mark of the true church; then no man can possibly know the church of Rome to be the true church, till we have examined the particular doctrines and practices of it, and the agreement of them with the primitive doctrine and practice of Christianity; and this necessarily draws on and engages them in a dispute of the particular points and differences betwixt us; which is the very thing they would avoid by this method, and which I have now plainly shewed they cannot do; because they cannot possibly prove their church to be the true church, without shewing the conformity of their doctrines and practices, to the doctrine and practice of the primitive and apostolick church; and this will give them work enough, and will, whether they will or no, draw them out of their hold and fastness; which

is to amuse people with a general enquiry, which is the true church? without descending to the examination of their particular doctrines and practices. But this they must of necessity come to, before they can prove by the notes and marks of the true church, that theirs is the true church.

And this is a demonstration, that their method of satisfaction, as it is unnatural and unreasonable, so it cannot serve the purpose they aim at by it; which is, to divert men from the examination of the particular points in difference between the church of Rome and us, and to gain them over to them by a wile and trick; because the very method they take to prove themselves to be the true catholick church, will enforce them to justify all their particular doctrines and practices, before they can finish this proof.

And here we fix our foot; that the single question and point, upon which they would put the whole issue of the matter, cannot possibly be brought to any reasonable issue, without a particular discussion and examination of the points in difference betwixt their church and ours: and when they can make out these to be agreeable to the primitive doctrine and practice of the christian church; we have reason to be satisfied, that the church of Rome is a church, in the communion whereof a man may be safe: but till that be made out, they have done nothing to persuade any man that understands himself, that it is safe, much less necessary to be of their communion. But if particular points must be discussed and cleared, before a man can be satisfied in the enquiry after the true church; then they must allow their intended convert to be a judge likewise of particular points; and if he be sufficient for that too, before he comes into their church, I do not see of what use the infallibility of the church will be to him, when he is in it. SER-

S E R M O N LXII.

Of Constancy in the Profession of the true Religion.

H E B. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ; for he is faithful that promised.

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The fifth
sermon on
this text.

I Have already made a considerable progress in my discourse upon these words, in which I told you, there is an exhortation to “ hold fast the profession “ of our faith without wavering :” and an argument or encouragement thereto, because “ he is faithful “ that promised.” I am yet upon the first of these, the exhortation to “ hold fast the profession of our “ faith without wavering ;” by which I told you the apostle doth not intend, that those who are capable of examining the grounds and reasons of their religion, should not have the liberty to do it ; nor that, when upon due enquiry they are, as they verily believe, established in the true faith and religion, they should obstinately refuse to hear any reason that is fairly offered against their present persuasion.

And then I proceed to shew positively,

First, What it is that we are exhorted to “ hold “ fast,” (viz.) “ the confession or profession of our “ faith ;” the ancient christian faith, of which every Christian makes profession in his baptism. For it is of that the apostle here speaks, as appears plainly by the context.

Secondly,

Secondly, How we are to "hold fast the profession of our faith." And of this I gave account in these following particulars.

1. We should "hold fast the profession of our faith," against the confidence of men, without scripture or reason to support that confidence.

2. And much more against the confidence of men, contrary to plain scripture and reason, and the common sense of mankind; of which I gave you particular instances.

3. Against all the temptations and terrors of the world.

4. Against all vain promises of being put into a safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to heaven upon easier terms, in some other church and religion. I am now upon the

5. And last particular I mentioned, namely, that we are to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," against all the cunning arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men, whose design it is to unhinge men from their religion, and to make profelytes to their party and faction. I have already mentioned some of the arts which they use, (I mean particularly them of the church of Rome) in making profelytes to their religion; and I have shewn the absurdity and unreasonableness of them. As,

First, In allowing men to be very competent and sufficient judges for themselves, in the choice of their religion; (i. e. which is the true church and religion in which alone salvation is to be had;) and yet telling them at the same time, that they are utterly incapable of judging of particular doctrines and points of faith. As for these, they must rely upon the judgment of an infallible church; and if they do not, they will certainly run into damnable errors and mistakes.

And they must of necessity allow them the first, a sufficient ability to judge for themselves in the choice of their religion : otherwise in vain do they offer them arguments to persuade them to theirs ; if they cannot judge of the force of them. But now, after this, to deny them all ability to judge of particular doctrines and points of faith, is a very absurd and inconsistent pretence.

Secondly, Another art they use, in order to their making a right choice of their religion, is earnestly to persuade them to hear and read only the arguments and books on their side : which is just as if one should go about to persuade a judge, in order to the better understanding and clearer decision of a cause, to hear only the counsel on one side.

Thirdly, They tell them that the only thing they are to enquire into, is, which is the true church, the one catholick church mentioned in the creed, out of which there is no salvation ; and when they have found that, they are to rely upon the authority of that church, which is infallible, for all other things. And this method they wisely take, to avoid particular disputes about the innovations and errors which we charge them withal. But I have shewn at large, that this cannot be the first enquiry : because it is not the true church, that makes the true christian faith and doctrine : but the profession of the true christian faith and doctrine, which makes the true church.

Besides, their way of proving their church to be the only true church, being by the marks and properties of the true church, of which the chief is, the conformity of their doctrines and practices with the primitive and apostolical church ; this unavoidably draws on an examination of their particular doctrines and practices, whether they be conformable to those

of the primitive and apostolical church, before their great enquiry, which is the true church? can be brought to an issue; which it is plain it can never be, without entering into the ocean of particular disputes, which they desire above all things to avoid. So that they are never the nearer by this method; they can neither shorten their work by it, nor keep off the examination of their particular errors and corruptions; which are a very fore place, and they cannot endure we should touch it.

I shall now proceed to discover some other arts and methods which they use in seducing people to their church and religion, and shall be as brief in them as I can.

Fourthly, They pretend that the Roman church is the catholick church, (i. e.) the visible society of all Christians, united to the bishop of Rome, as the supreme pastor and visible head of CHRIST's church upon earth: from whence it clearly follows, that it is necessary to all Christians to join themselves to the communion of the Roman church; otherwise they cannot be members of the catholick church of CHRIST, out of which there is no salvation.

We grant the consequence, that if the Roman church be the catholick church, it is necessary to be of that communion; because out of the catholick church there is ordinarily no salvation to be had. But how do they prove, that the Roman church is the catholick church? They would fain have us so civil, as to take this for granted: because if we do not; they do not well know how to go about to prove it. And indeed, some things are obstinate, and will not be proved without so much trouble and difficulty, that it is better to let them alone; and by the confident assertion of them, by importunity, and by any other

fair means, to get them believed, without proof of this stubborn sort of propositions, which will admit of no proof. This is one, that a part is the whole; or, which is all one, that the Roman church is the catholick church. For that is but a part of the christian church, and not the best part neither, but perhaps the very worst and most corrupt of all the rest, is no difficult matter to prove, and hath been often done. But now to prove the church of Rome to be the catholick church, that is, the whole society of all true Christians in the world, these following particulars ought to be clearly shewn and made out.

1. A plain constitution of our SAVIOUR, whereby St. Peter and his successors at Rome are made the supreme head and pastors of the whole christian church. For St. Peter first. Can they shew any such constitution in the gospel, or can they produce the least proof and evidence out of the history of the acts and the epistles of the apostles, that St. Peter was acknowledged for such by the rest of the apostles? Nay, is there not clear evidence there to the contrary, that in the first council of the christian church at Jerusalem, St. James, the bishop of Jerusalem was, if not superior, at least equal to him? Does St. Paul acknowledge any superiority of St. Peter over him? Nay, does he not upon several occasions declare himself equal to the chiefest apostles, even to St. Peter himself? And is this consistent with a plain constitution of our LORD's making St. Peter supreme head and pastor of the christian church?

But suppose this to have been so; where doth it appear, by any constitution of our SAVIOUR, that this authority was derived to his successors? And if it were, why to his successors at Rome, rather than at Antioch, where he was first, and unquestionably bishop?

bishop? They must acknowledge, that when he was bishop of Antioch, he was the supreme head and pastor of the whole christian church; and then the stile must have been, the Antiochian catholick church, as it is now the Roman catholick. But do they find any footsteps of such a stile in ecclesiastical history?

2. To make good this proposition, that the Roman church is the catholick church, they are in consequence obliged to affirm and believe, that the churches of Asia, which were excommunicated by the bishops of Rome, for not keeping easter as they did; and the churches of Asia and Africa, which were excommunicated by the same bishop, upon the point of rebaptizing hereticks; that all these, by being turn'd out of the communion of the Roman church, were also cut off from the catholick church, and from a possibility of salvation. This the church of Rome themselves will not affirm; and yet, if to be cast out of the communion of the Roman and the catholick church be all one, they must affirm it.

3. In consequence of this proposition, that the church of Rome is the catholick church, they ought to hold, that all baptism out of the communion of their church is void and of none effect. For if it be good; then it makes the persons baptized, members of the catholick church; and then those that are out of the communion of the Roman church, may be true members of the catholick church; and then the Roman and the catholick church are not all one. But the church of Rome holds the baptism of hereticks, and of those that are out of the communion of their church, to be good; which is a demonstration, that the Roman church neither is the catholick church; nor if she believe consistently, can she think herself to be so.

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4. In consequence of this proposition, all the Christians in the world, which do not yield subjection to the bishop of Rome, and acknowledge his supremacy, are no true parts of the catholick church, nor in a possibility of salvation. And this does not only exclude those of the reform'd religion from being members of the catholick church; but the Greeks, and the eastern churches, (i. e.) four of the five patriarchal churches of the christian world; which taken together, are really greater than those in communion with the church of Rome. And this the church of Rome does affirm, concerning all those churches and Christians, which refuse subjection to the bishop of Rome, that they are out of the communion of the catholick church, and a capacity of salvation. But surely it is not possible, that the true catholick church of CHRIST can have so little charity as this comes to; and to a wise man there needs no other demonstration than this, that the church of Rome is so far from being the whole christian church, that 'tis a very arrogant and uncharitable part of it.

5. And lastly, In consequence of the truth of this proposition, and of the importance of it to the salvation of souls, and to the peace and unity of the christian church, they ought to produce express mention of the Roman catholick church, in the ancient creeds of the christian church. For if this proposition, that the Roman church is the catholick, be true; it was always so, and always of the greatest importance to the salvation of men, and the peace and unity of the christian church: and if it were so, and always believed to be so, by the christian church, as they pretend; what reason can be imagined, why the ancient christian church should never say so, nor

put an article of such consequence and importance in express words in their creeds; nor why they should not have used the stile of Roman catholick, as familiarly then, as they do now in the Roman church? A plain evidence that this is a new stile which they use, when they give themselves the title of the Roman catholick church; and that the ancient christian church knew better, than to call one part of the catholick church, the whole. I am sure, that Æneas Sylvius (who was afterwards pope Pius the second) says, that before the council of Nice, little respect was had to the Roman church. But how does this consist with their present pretence, that the Roman church is, and always hath been the catholick church; and that the bishop of Rome is by CHRIST'S appointment, the supreme pastor, and visible head of the whole christian church? Is it possible that this should be believed in the christian church before the council of Nice; and yet little respect to be had at that time to the Roman church? This indeed was said by Æneas Sylvius, before he sat in the infallible chair; but is never the less true for that.

Fifthly, the next step of their method is, that the Roman church is infallible; and by this means they have a certain remedy against heresy, and a judge of controversies, from which there is no appeal, which we want in our church. And this is a glorious privilege indeed, if they could prove that they had it, and that it would be so certain a remedy against heresy, and give a final decision to all controversies. But there is not one tittle of all this, of which they are able to give any tenable proof: For,
1. All the pretence for their infallibility relies upon the truth of the former proposition, that the church

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church of Rome is the catholick church, and that they say is infallible: and I have already shewn, that that proposition is not only destitute of any good proof; but is as evidently false, as that a part of a thing is the whole.

2. But supposing it were true, that the Roman Church were the catholick church; yet it is neither evident in itself, nor can be proved by them, that the catholick church of every age is infallible, in deciding all controversies of religion. It is granted by all Christians, that our SAVIOUR and his apostles were infallible, in the delivery of the christian doctrine, and they proved their infallibility by miracles; and this was necessary at first for the security of our faith: but this doctrine being once delivered and transmitted down to us in the holy scriptures, written by the evangelists and apostles, who were infallibly assisted by the Holy Ghost; we have now a certain and infallible rule of faith and practice, which, with the assistance and instruction of those guides and pastors which CHRIST hath appointed in his Church, is sufficiently plain in all things necessary. And as there is no evidence of the continuance of infallibility in the guides and pastors of the church, in the ages which followed the apostles; because miracles are long since ceased: so there is no need of the continuance of it, for the preservation of the true faith and religion; because GOD hath sufficiently provided for that, by that infallible rule of faith and manners which he hath left to his church in the holy scriptures, which are every way sufficient and able to make both pastors and people wise unto salvation.

3. As for a certain remedy against heresy, it is certain GOD never intended there should be any;

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no more than he hath provided a certain remedy against sin and vice; which surely is every whit as contrary to the christian religion, and therefore as fit to be provided against, as heresy: but it is certain in experience, that GOD hath provided no certain and effectual remedy against sin and vice: for which I can give no other reason, but that GOD does that which he thinks best and fittest, and not what we are apt to think to be so.

Besides that infallibility is not a certain remedy against heresy. The apostles were certainly infallible; and yet they could neither prevent nor extinguish heresy; which never more abounded than in the apostles times. And St. Paul expressly tells us, 1 Cor. i. 19. "That there must be heresies; that they which are approved may be made manifest." And St. Peter, the 2d epistle ii. 1. "That there should be false teachers among Christians, who should privily bring in damnable heresies; and that many should follow their pernicious ways." But now if there must be heresies; either the church must not be infallible, or infallibility in the church is no certain remedy against them.

I proceed to the next step they make, viz.

Sixthly, that CHRIST hath always a visible church upon earth; and that they can shew a church, which, from the time of CHRIST and his apostles, hath always made a visible profession of the same doctrines and practices which are now believed and practised in the church of Rome: but that we can shew no visible church, that from the time of CHRIST and his apostles hath always opposed the church of Rome, in those doctrines and practices which we now revile and find fault with in their church.

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That CHRIST hath always had, and ever shall have to the end of the world, a visible church, professing and practising his true faith and religion, is agreed on both sides: but we say that he hath nowhere promised, that this should be free from all errors and corruptions in faith and practice. This the churches planted by the apostles themselves were not, even in their times, and during their abode amongst them; and yet they were true parts of the christian catholick church. In the following ages, errors and corruptions and superstitions did by degrees creep in and grow up, in several parts of the church; as St. Austin, and other of the fathers complain of in their times. Since that, several famous parts of the christian church, both in Asia and Africa, have not only been greatly corrupted, but have apostatized from the faith; so that in many places there are hardly any footsteps of Christianity among them. But yet still CHRIST hath had in all these ages a visible church upon earth; though perhaps no part of it at all times free from some errors and corruptions; and in several parts of it, great corruptions both in faith and practice; and in none I think more and longer, than in the church of Rome, for all she boasts herself like old Babylon, Isa. xlvii. 7, 8. "That she is a lady for ever; and says in her heart, "I am, and none else besides me;" and like the church of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. which said, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;" when the spirit of God saith, that "she was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and knew it not."

Thus the church of Rome boasts; that she hath in all ages been the true visible church of CHRIST, (and none besides her) free from all errors in doctrine,

trine, and corruptions in practice; and that from the age of CHRIST and his apostles, she hath always professed the same doctrines and practices which she does at this day. Can any thing be more shameful than this? Did they always believe transubstantiation? Let their pope Gelasius speak for them; who expressly denies, that in the sacrament there is any substantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of CHRIST. Was this always an article of their faith, and necessary to be believed by all Christians? Let Scotus, and several other of their schoolmen and learned writers, speak for them. Was purgatory always believed in the Roman church, as it is now defined in the council of Trent? Let several of their learned men speak. In what father; in what council before that of Trent, do they find CHRIST to have instituted just seven sacraments, neither more nor less? and for practices in their religion, they themselves will not say, that in the ancient christian church the scriptures were withheld from the people, and lock'd up in an unknown tongue; and that the publick service of God, the prayers and lessons were read, and the sacraments celebrated, in an unknown tongue; and that the sacrament of the LORD's supper was given to the people only in one kind. Where do they find in holy scripture, or in the doctrine and practice of the ancient christian church, any command or example for the worship of images; for the invocation of saints and angels and the blessed virgin; which do now make a great part of their religion? Nay, is not the doctrine of the scriptures, and of the ancient fathers plainly against all these practices? With what face then can it be said, that the church of Rome hath made a constant visible profession of the same faith and

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practice in all ages, from the time of CHRIST and his apostles? Or would the primitive church of Rome, if it should now visit the earth again, own the present church of Rome to be the same in all matters of faith and practice, that it was when they left it?

And whereas they demand of us, to shew a visible church from the time of CHRIST and his apostles, that hath always opposed the church of Rome, in those points of doctrine and practice which we object to them; what can be more impertinent than this demand? When they know that in all these points we charge them with innovations in matters of faith and practice, and say that those things came in by degrees, several ages after the apostles time, some sooner, some later; as we are able to make good, and have done it. And would they have us shew them a visible church, that opposed these errors and corruptions in their church, before ever they appeared? This we do not pretend to shew. And supposing they had not been at all opposed, when they appeared, nor a long time after, not till the reformation; yet if they be errors and corruptions of the christian doctrine, and contrary to the holy scriptures, and to the faith and practice of the primitive church; there is no prescription against truth. It is never too late, for any church to reject those errors and corruptions, and to reform itself from them.

The bottom of all this matter is, they would have us to shew them a society of Christians, that in all ages hath preserved itself free from all such errors and corruptions, as we charge them withal; or else we deny the perpetual visibility of the catholick church. No such matter. We say the church of CHRIST hath always been visible in every age since CHRIST's time; and that the several societies of Christians,

professing the christian doctrine and laws of CHRIST, have made up the catholick church; some parts whereof have in several ages fallen into great errors and corruptions; and no part of the catholick, into more and greater, than the church of Rome; so that it requires the utmost of our charity to think that they are a true, though a very unsound and corrupt part of the catholick church of CHRIST.

We acknowledge likewise, that we were once involved in the like degeneracy; but by the mercy of GOD, and pious care and prudence of those that were in authority, are happily rescued out of it: and though we were not out of the catholick church before; yet since our reformation from the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome, we are in it upon better terms, and are a much sounder part of it; and I hope by the mercy and goodness of GOD, we shall for ever continue so.

So that to the perpetual visibility of CHRIST's church, it is not necessary, that the whole christian church, or indeed that any part of it should be free from all errors and corruptions. Even the churches planted by the apostles in the primitive times were not so. St. Paul reproves several doctrines, and practices in the church of Corinth, and of Colosse, and of Galatia; and the spirit of GOD, several things in the seven churches of Asia: and yet all these were true parts and members of the catholick church of CHRIST, notwithstanding these faults and errors; because they all agreed in the main and essential doctrines of Christianity. And when more and greater corruptions grew upon the church, or any part of it; the greater reason and need there was of a reformation. And as every particular person hath a right to reform any thing that he finds amiss in himself, so far as concerns himself; so much more every national church

church hath a power within itself, to reform itself from all errors and corruptions, and by the sanction of the catholick authority to confirm that reformation; which is our case here in England. And whatever part of the church, how great and eminent soever, excludes from her communion such a national church, for reforming herself from plain errors and corruptions, clearly condemned by the word of God, and by the doctrine and practice of the primitive christian church, is undoubtedly guilty of schism. And this is the truth of the case between us and the church of Rome. And no blind talk about a perpetual visible church can render us guilty of schism, for making a real reformation; or acquit them of it, for casting us out of their communion for that cause.

Seventhly, and lastly, (to mention no more) they pretend that we delude the people, by laying too much stress upon the scripture, and making it the only rule of faith and manners: whereas scripture and tradition together make up the entire rule of faith; and not scripture interpreted by every man's private fancy, but by tradition carefully preserved in the church. So that it ought to be no wonder, if several of their doctrines and practices cannot be so clearly made out by scripture, or perhaps seem contrary to it, as it may be expounded by a private spirit; but not as interpreted by the tradition of the church, which can only give the true sense of scripture. And therefore they are to understand, that several of those doctrines and practices, which we object against, are most clearly proved by the tradition of their church, which is of equal authority with scripture.

In this objection of theirs, which they design for the cover of all their errors and corruptions, there are several things distinctly to be considered, which I shall do as briefly as I can.

First,

First, Whereas it is suggested, that we delude the people, by laying too much stress upon the scriptures, (which certainly we cannot well do, if it be the word of God) it ought to be considered, whether they do not delude and abuse them infinitely more, in keeping the scriptures from them, and not suffering them to see that which they cannot deny to be at least a considerable part of the rule of christian doctrine and practice. Doth it not by this dealing of theirs appear very suspicious, that they are extremely afraid that the people should examine their doctrine and practice by this rule? For what other reason can they have to conceal it from them?

Secondly, Whereas they affirm, that scripture alone is not the rule of christian faith and practice, but that scripture, and oral tradition preserved in the church, and delivered down from hand to hand, make up the entire rule; I would fain know whence they learned this new doctrine of the rule of faith. I know that the council of Trent declares it for the rule they intend to proceed upon and make use of, for the confirmation and proof of their following determinations and decrees. But did any of the ancient councils of the christian church lay down this rule, and proceed upon it? Did not Constantine the emperor, at the opening of the first general council, lay the bible before them, as the only rule, according to which they were to proceed; and this with the approbation of all those holy fathers that were assembled in that council? And did not following councils proceed upon the same rule? Do any of the ancient fathers ever mention any rule of christian faith and practice, besides the holy scriptures, and the ancient creed; which, because it is an abridgment of the necessary articles of christian faith contained in the holy scriptures, is by

by them frequently called the rule of faith? Do not the same fathers frequently and expressly say, that the scriptures are a perfect rule, and that all things are plainly contained in them, which concern faith and life; and that whatever cannot be proved by testimony of scripture, is to be rejected? All this I assure I can make good, by innumerable express testimonies of the ancient fathers, which are well known to those that are versed in them. By what authority then hath the council of Trent set up this new rule, unknown to the christian church for 1500 years? And who gave them this authority? The plain truth is, the necessity of it for the defence of the errors and corruptions which they had embraced, and were resolved not to part with, forced them to lengthen out the rule; the old rule of the holy scriptures being too short for their purpose.

Thirdly, Whereas they pretend that holy scripture, as expounded by a private spirit, may not seem so favourable to some of their doctrines and practices; yet, as interpreted by tradition, which can only give the true sense of scripture, it agrees very well with them: I suppose they mean, that whereas a private spirit would be apt to understand some texts of scripture, as if people were to search and read the scripture; tradition interprets those texts in a quite other sense, that people are not to be permitted to read the holy scriptures. A private spirit would be apt to understand St. Paul's discourse, in the 14th of the 1st to the Corinthians, to be against celebrating prayer and the service of God in an unknown tongue, as being contrary to edification, and indeed to common sense, for he says, "If one should come, and find them speaking and praying in an unknown tongue, will they not say, ye are mad?" But now tradi-

tion,

tion, which only knows how to give the true sense, can reconcile this discourse of St. Paul very easily with the practice of the church of Rome in this matter. And so likewise the epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians, with the worship of angels; and the epistle to the Hebrews, with offering the propitiatory sacrifice of CHRIST in the mass a thousand times every day. And to give but one instance more; whereas a man by his private spirit would be very apt to understand the second commandment to forbid all worship of images; tradition discovers the meaning of this commandment to be, that due veneration is to be given to them. So that at this rate of interpreting scripture by tradition, it is impossible to fix any objection from scripture, upon any doctrine or practice which they have a mind to maintain.

Fourthly, Whereas they pretend the tradition of their church, delivered from the mouth of CHRIST, or dictated by the holy Spirit, and brought down to them, and preserved by continual succession in the church, to be of equal authority with the word of GOD; for so the council of Trent says, "that the holy synod doth receive and venerate these traditions with equal pious affection and reverence, as they do the written word of God:" this we must declare against as unreasonable in itself, to make tradition, conveyed by word of mouth from one to another, through so many ages, and liable to so many mistakes and miscarriages, to be, at the distance of 1500 years, of equal certainty and authority with the holy scriptures, carefully preserved and transmitted down to us; because this (as I said before) is to make common rumor and report of equal authority and certainty with a written record. And not only so; but hereby they make the scriptures an imperfect rule;

contrary to the declared judgment of the ancient fathers and councils of the christian church; and so, in truth, they set up a new rule of faith, whereby they change the christian religion. For a new rule of faith and religion makes a new faith and religion. This we charge the church of Rome with, and do challenge them to shew this new rule of faith, before the council of Trent; and consequently where their religion was before that council; to shew a religion, consisting of all those articles, which are defined by the council of Trent as necessary to salvation, and established upon this new rule, professed by any christian church in the world before that time. And as they have pitched upon a new rule of faith; so it is easy to see to what end. For take pope Pius IV. his creed, and we may see where the old and new religion parts; even at the end of the twelve articles of the apostles creed, which was the ancient christian faith; to which are added in pope Pius his creed twelve articles more, defined in the council of Trent, and supported only by tradition. So that as the scripture answers for the twelve old articles, which are plainly contained there; so tradition is to answer for the twelve new ones. And therefore the matter was calculated very exactly, when they make tradition just of equal authority with the scriptures; because as many articles of their faith were to be made good by it, and rely upon it, as those which are proved by the authority of scripture. But that tradition is of equal authority with the scriptures, we have nothing in the whole world for it, but the bare assertion of the council of Trent.

I should now have added some other considerations, tending to confirm and establish us in our religion, against the pretences and insinuations of seducing spirits: but I shall proceed no farther at present. SER-

S E R M O N LXIII.

Of Constancy in the Profession of the true Religion.

H E B. X. 23.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ; for he is faithful that promised.

THESE words contain an exhortation “ to hold
 “ fast the profession of our faith without wa-
 “ vering,” and an argument or encouragement there-
 to, because “ he is faithful that promised.” By
 the exhortation to “ hold fast the profession of our
 “ faith without wavering,” is not meant, that those
 who are capable of examining the grounds and rea-
 sons of their religion should blindly hold it fast against
 the best reasons that can be offered ; because upon
 these terms, every man must continue in the religion
 in which he happens to be fixt by education, or an
 ill choice, be his religion true or false, without exa-
 mining and looking into it, whether it be right or
 wrong ; for till a man examines, every man thinks
 his religion right. That which the apostle here
 exhorts Christians to hold fast is the ancient faith,
 of which all Christians make a solemn profession in
 their baptism ; as plainly appears from the context.
 And this “ profession of our faith,” we are to hold
 in the following instances, which I shall but briefly
 mention, without enlarging upon them.

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LXIII.The sixth
sermon on
this text.

Of constancy in the

1. We are "to hold fast the profession of our
"faith" against the confidence of men, without scrip-
ture or reason to support that confidence.

2. And much more, against the confidence of
men contrary to plain scripture and reason, and to
the common sense of mankind.

3. Against all the temptations and terrors of the
world, against the temptations of fashion and ex-
ample, and of worldly interest and advantage, and
against all terrors and sufferings of persecution.

4. Against all vain promises of being put into a
safer condition, and groundless hopes of getting to
heaven upon easier terms than the gospel has pro-
posed in some other church and religion.

Lastly, we are "to hold fast the profession of our
"faith without wavering," against all the cunning
arts and insinuations of busy and disputing men,
whose design it is to unhinge men from their religion,
and to make profelytes to their party and faction.

But without entring into these particulars, I shall
in order to our establishment in the reformed religion
which we profess, in opposition to the errors and
corruptions of the church of Rome, apply myself at
this time, to make a short comparison betwixt the
religion which we profess, and that of the church of
Rome, that we may discern on which side the ad-
vantage of truth lyes; and in making this compari-
son, I shall insist upon three things, which will bring
the matter to an issue, and are, I think, sufficient to
determine every sober and considerate man, which of
these he ought in reason, and with regard to the
safety of his soul, to embrace; and they are these.

I. That we govern our belief and practice in mat-
ters of religion, by the true ancient rule of christi-
anity, the word of God contained in the holy scrip-
tures:

tures : but the church of Rome, for the maintenance of their errors and corruptions, have been forced to devise a new rule, never owned by the primitive church, nor by the ancient fathers and councils of it.

II. That the doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us and the church of Rome, are either contrary to this rule, or destitute of the warrant and authority of it, and are plain additions to the ancient christianity, and corruptions of it.

III. That our religion hath many clear advantages of that of the church of Rome, not only very considerable in themselves, but very obvious and discernable to an ordinary capacity, upon the first proposal of them. I shall be as brief in these as I can.

I. That we govern our belief and practice in matters of religion, by the true ancient rule of christianity, the word of God contained in the holy scriptures : but the church of Rome, for the maintaining of their errors and corruptions, have been forced to devise a new rule, never owned by the primitive church, nor by the ancient councils and fathers of it ; that is, they have joined with the word of God, contained in the holy scriptures, the unwritten traditions of their church, concerning several points of their faith and practice, which they acknowledge cannot be proved from scripture, and these they call the unwritten word of God ; and the council of Trent hath decreed them to be of equal authority with the holy scriptures, and that they do receive and venerate them with the same pious affection and reverence ; and all this, contrary to the express declaration and unanimous consent of all the ancient councils and fathers of the christian church, (as I have already shewn ;) and this never declar'd to be a point of faith, till it was decreed, not much above
a hun-

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a hundred years ago, in the council of Trent. And this surely, if any thing, is a matter of great consequence, to presume to alter the ancient rule of christian doctrine and practice, and to enlarge it, and add to it, at their pleasure. But the church of Rome having made so great a change in the doctrine and practice of christianity, it became consequently necessary to make a change of the rule: and therefore with great reason did the council of Trent take this into consideration in the first place, and put it in the front of their decrees, because it was to be the foundation and main proof of the following definitions of faith, and decrees of practice, for which, without this new rule, there had been no colour.

II. The doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us, and the church of Rome, are either contrary to the true rule, or destitute of the warrant and authority of it, and plain additions to the ancient christianity, and corruptions of it. The truth of this will best appear, by instancing in some of the principal doctrines and practices in difference betwixt us.

As for their two great fundamental doctrines, of the supremacy of the bishop of Rome over all the Christians in the world, and the infallibility of their church, there is not one word in scripture concerning these privileges; nay it is little less than a demonstration that they have no such privileges, that St. Paul in a long epistle to the church of Rome takes no notice of them, that the church of Rome either then was, or was to be soon after, the mother and mistress of all churches, which is now grown to be an article of faith in the church of Rome; and yet it is hardly to be imagined, that he could have omitted to take notice of such remarkable privileges of their bishops and church, above any in the world, had he known they had belonged to them.

them. So that in all probability he was ignorant of those mighty prerogatives of the church of Rome ; otherwise it cannot be, but that he would have written with more deference and submission to this seat of infallibility, and center of unity ; he would certainly have paid a greater respect to this mother and mistress of all churches, where the head of the church, and vicar of CHRIST either was already seated, or by the appointment of CHRIST was designed for ever to sit his throne and establish his residence ; but there is not one word, or the least intimation of any such thing throughout this whole epistle, nor in any other part of the new testament.

Besides that both these pretended privileges are omitted, by plain fact and evidence of things themselves ; their supremacy, in that the far greatest part of the christian church, neither is at this day, nor can be shewn by the records of any age, ever to have been subject to the bishop of Rome, or to have acknowledged his authority and jurisdiction over them : and the infallibility of the pope, whether with or without a general council, about which they still differ, though infallibility was devised on purpose, to determine all differences ; I say, this infallibility, wherever it is pretended to be, is plainly confuted by the contradictory definitions of several popes and councils ; for if they have contradicted one another, it is plain, beyond all contradiction, in several instances, then there must of necessity be an error on one side ; and there can be no so certain demonstration, that any one is infallible, as evident error and mistake is of the contrary.

Next, their concealing both the rule of religion, and the practice of it in the worship and service of GOD, from the people, in an unknown tongue ;
and

and their administering the communion to the people in one kind only, contrary to clear scripture, and the plain institution of our blessed SAVIOUR. And then their worship of images, and invocation of angels and saints, and the blessed virgin, in the same solemn manner, and for the same blessings and benefits which we beg of GOD himself; contrary to the express word of GOD, which commands us "to worship the LORD our GOD, and to serve him only;" and which declares, that as there is but "one GOD," so there is but "one mediator between GOD and man, CHRIST JESUS;" but one mediator, not only of redemption, but of intercession too; for the apostle there speaks of a mediator of intercession, by whom only we are to offer up our prayers, which are to be put up to GOD only; and which expressly forbids men to worship any image or likeness. And the learned men of their own church acknowledge, that there is neither precept nor example for these practices in scripture, and that they were not used in the christian church for several ages; and this acknowledgment we think very considerable, since so great a part of their religion, especially as it is practised among the people, is contained in these points. For the service of GOD in an unknown tongue, and withholding the scriptures from the people, they do not pretend so much as one testimony of any father for the first 600 years; and nothing certainly can be more unreasonable in it self, than to deny people the best means of knowing the will of GOD, and not to permit them to understand what is done in the publick worship of GOD, and what prayers are put up to him in the church.

The two great doctrines of transubstantiation and purgatory are acknowledged by many of their own

learned

learned writers, to have no certain foundation in scripture: and that there are seven sacraments of the christian religion, though it be now made an article of faith by the council of Trent, is a thing which cannot be shewn in any council or father for above a thousand years after CHRIST. And we find no mention of this number of the sacraments, till the age of Peter Lombard the father of the schoolmen.

That the church of Rome is the mother and mistress of all churches, though that also be one of the new articles of pope Pius IV. his creed, which their priests are by a solemn oath obliged to believe and teach; yet it is most evidently false. That she is not the mother of all churches is plain, because Jerusalem was certainly so; for there certainly was the first christian church, and from thence all the christian churches in the world derive themselves: that she is not, (though she fain would be) the mistress of all churches, is as evident, because the greatest part of the christian church does at this day, and always did, deny that she hath any authority or supremacy over them. Now these are the principal matters in difference betwixt us; and if these points, and a few more, be pared off from popery, that which remains of their religion, is the same with ours, that is, the true ancient christianity.

III. I shall shew that our religion hath many clear advantages of theirs, not only very considerable in themselves, but very obvious and discernible to an ordinary capacity, upon the very first proposal of them; as,

1. That our religion agrees perfectly with the scriptures, and all points both of our belief and practice, esteemed by us as necessary to salvation, are there contained, even our enemies themselves being judges.

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We “ worship the LORD our GOD, and him only” do we “ serve.” We do not fall down before images and worship them : we address all prayers to GOD alone, by the only mediation and intercession of his son JESUS CHRIST, as he himself hath given us commandment, and as St. Paul doth plainly direct, giving us this plain and substantial reason for it, because as there is but “ one GOD,” so there is but “ one mediator between GOD and man, the man “ CHRIST JESUS.”

The publick worship and service of GOD is perform'd by us in a language which we understand, according to St. Paul's express order and direction, and the universal practice of the ancient church, and the nature and reason of the thing itself. We administer the sacrament of the LORD's supper in both kinds, according to our SAVIOUR's example and plain institution, and the continual practice of all the christian churches in the world, for above a thousand years.

2. We believe nothing as necessary to salvation, but what hath been owned in all ages to be the christian doctrine, and is acknowledged so to be by the church of Rome it self; and we receive the whole faith of the primitive christian church, (viz.) whatever is contained in the apostles creed, and in the explications of that in the creeds of the four first general councils. By which it plainly appears, that all the points of faith in difference betwixt us and the church of Rome are mere innovations and plain additions to the ancient christian faith : but all that we believe, is acknowledged by them to be undoubtedly the ancient christian faith.

3. There is nothing wanting in our church and religion, whether in matter of faith or practice, which
either

either the scripture makes necessary to salvation, or was so esteemed by the christian church for the first five hundred years; and we trust, that what was sufficient for the salvation of Christians in the best ages of christianity, for five hundred years together, may be so still; and we are very well content to venture our salvation upon the same terms that they did.

4. Our religion is not only free from all idolatrous worship, but even from all suspicion and probable charge of any such thing: but this the church of Rome is not, as is acknowledged by her most learned champions, and as no man of ingenuity can deny; and the reason which the learned men give, why the worship of images and the invocation of angels and saints departed were not practised in the primitive church, for the first three hundred years, is a plain acknowledgment that these practices are very liable to the suspicion of idolatry; for they say, that the Christians did then forbear those practices, because they seemed to come too near to the pagan idolatry, and lest the heathen should have taken occasion to have justified themselves, if these things had been practised among Christians; and they cannot now be ignorant, what scandal they give by these practices both to the Jews and Turks, and how much they alienate them from christianity by this scandal; nor can they chuse but be sensible, upon how great disadvantage they are in defending these practices from the charge of idolatry, and that by all their blind distinctions, with which they raise such a cloud and dust, they can hardly make any plausible and tolerable defence of themselves from this charge; insomuch that to secure their own people from discerning their guilt in this matter, they have been put upon that shameful shift of leaving out the second commandment in

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their common catechisms and manuals, lest the people seeing so plain a law of God, against so common a practice of their church, should upon that discovery have broken off from them.

5. Nor is our religion incumbered with such an endless number of superstitious and troublesom observances, as theirs infinitely is, even beyond the number of the Jewish ceremonies, to the great burden and scandal of the christian religion, and the diverting of mens minds from the spiritual part of religion, and the more weighty and necessary duties of the christian life; so that, in truth, a devout pastor is so taken up with the external rites and little observances of his religion, that he hath little or no time to make himself a good man, and to cultivate and improve his mind in true piety and virtue.

6. Our religion is evidently more charitable to all Christians that differ from us, and particularly to them, who, by their uncharitableness to us, have done as much as is possible to discharge and damp our charity towards them. And charity, as it is one of the most essential marks of a true Christian, so it is likewise the best mark and ornament of a true church; and of all things that can be thought of, methinks the want of charity in any church should be a motive to no man to fall in love with it, and to be fond of it's communion.

7. Our religion doth not clash and interfere with any of the great moral duties, to which all mankind stand obliged by the law and light of nature; as fidelity, mercy, and truth. We do not teach men to break faith with heretics or infidels; nor to destroy and extirpate those who differ from us, with fire and sword: no such thing as equivocation or mental reservation, or any other artificial way of falsehood, is
either

either taught or maintained, either by the doctrine or by the casuists of our church.

8. Our religion and all the doctrines of it are perfectly consistent with the peace of civil government, and the welfare of human society. We neither exempt the clergy from subjection to the civil powers; nor absolve subjects upon any pretence whatsoever from allegiance to their princes; both which points, the necessity of the one, and the lawfulness of the other, have been taught and stiffly maintained in the church of Rome, not only by private doctors, but by popes and general councils.

9. The doctrines of our religion are perfectly free from all suspicion of a worldly interest and design; whereas the greatest part of the erroneous doctrines, with which we charge the church of Rome, are plainly calculated to promote the end of worldly greatness and dominion.

The pope's kingdom is plainly of this world; and the doctrines and maxims of it, like so many servants, are ready upon all occasions to fight for him. For most of them do plainly tend, either to the establishment and enlargement of his authority; or to the magnifying of the priests, and the giving them a perfect power over the consciences of the people, and the keeping them in a slavish subjection and blind obedience to them. And to this purpose do plainly tend the doctrines of exempting the clergy from the secular power and jurisdiction; the doctrine of transubstantiation; for it must needs make the priest a great man in the opinion of the people, to believe that he can make God, as they love to express it, without all reason and reverence. Of the like tendency is the communicating of the laity only in one kind, thereby making it the sole privilege of the priest to receive

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receive the sacrament in both: the withholding the scripture from the people, and celebrating the service of God in an unknown tongue: the doctrine of an implicit faith, and absolute resignation of their judgments to their teachers: these do all directly tend to keep the people in ignorance, and to bring them to a blind obedience to the dictates of their teachers. So likewise the necessity of the intention of the priest, to the saving virtue and efficacy of the sacraments; by which doctrine, the people do upon the matter depend as much upon the good will of the priest, as upon the mercy of God for their salvation. But above all, their doctrine of the necessity of auricular and private confession of all mortal sins committed after baptism, with all the circumstances of them to the priest; and this not only for the ease and direction of their consciences, but as a necessary condition of having their sins pardoned and forgiven by God: by which means they make themselves masters of all the secrets of the people, and keep them in awe by the knowledge of their faults, *scire volunt secreta domus atque inde timeri*. Or else their doctrines tend to filthy lucre, and the enriching of their church. As their doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, and their prayers and masses for the dead, and many more doctrines and practices of the like kind plainly do.

10. Our religion is free from all disingenuous and dishonest arts of maintaining and supporting itself. Such are clipping of ancient authors, nay and even the authors and writers of their own church, when they speak too freely of any point; as may be seen in their *indices expurgatorii* which much against their wills have been brought to light. To which I only add these three gross forgeries, which lye all at their doors, and they cannot deny them to be so.

I. The

1. The pretended canon of the council of Nice in the case of appeals, between the church of Rome and the African church ; upon which they insisted a great while very confidently, till at last they were convinced by authentick copies of the canons of that council.

2. Constantine's donation to the pope, which they kept a great stir with, till the forgery of it was discovered.

3. The decretal epistles of the ancient popes ; a large volume of forgeries compiled by Isidore Mercator, to countenance the usurpations of the bishop of Rome, and of which the church of Rome made a great use for several ages, and pertinaciously defended the authority of them, till the learned men of their own church have at last been forced for very shame to disclaim them, and to confess the imposture of them. A like instance whereto is not I hope to be shewn in any christian church. This is that which St. Paul calls *κωδεία*, "the sleight of men," such as gamesters use at dice ; for to alledge false and forged authors in this case, is to play with false dice, when the salvation of mens souls lyes at stake.

11. Our religion has this mighty advantage, that it doth not decline trial and examination, which to any man of ingenuity must needs appear a very good sign of an honest cause ; but if any church be shy of having her religion examined, and her doctrines and practices brought into the open light, this gives just ground of suspicion that she hath some distrust of them ; for truth doth not seek corners, nor shun the light. Our SAVIOUR hath told us who they are that "love darkness rather than light, viz. they whose deeds are evil ; for every one," saith he, "that doth evil hateth the light ; neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd and
" made

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“ made manifest.” There needs no more to render a religion suspected to a wise man, than to see those who profess it, and make such proud boasts of the truth and goodness of it, so fearful that it should be examined and looked into, and that their people should take the liberty to hear and read what can be said against it.

12. We persuade men to our religion by human and christian ways, such as our SAVIOUR and his apostles used, by urging men with the authority of God, and with arguments fetcht from another world, the promise of eternal life and happiness, and the threatening of eternal death and misery, which are the proper arguments of religion, and which alone are fitted to work upon the minds and consciences of men. The terror and torture of death may make men hypocrites, and awe them to profess with their mouths what they do not believe in their hearts; but this is no proper means of converting the soul, and convincing the minds and consciences of men; and these violent and cruel ways cannot be denied to have been practised in the church of Rome, and set on foot by the authority of councils, and greatly countenanced and encouraged by popes themselves; witness the many croisades for the extirpation of hereticks, the standing cruelties of their inquisition, their occasional massacres and persecutions, of which we have fresh instances in every age.

But these methods of conversion are a certain sign that they either distrust the truth and goodness of their cause, or else that they think truth and the arguments for it are of no force, when dragoons are their *ratio ultima*, the last reason which their cause relies upon, and the best and most effectual it can afford.

Again, we hold no doctrines in defiance of the

confes

senses of all mankind ; such as is that of transubstantiation, which is now declared in the church of Rome to be a necessary article of faith, so that a man cannot be of that religion, unless he will renounce his senses, and believe against the clear verdict of them in a plain sensible matter : but after this, I do not understand how a man can believe any thing, because by this very thing he destroys and takes away the foundation of all certainty. If any man forbid me to believe what I see, I forbid him to believe any thing upon better and surer evidence. St. Paul saith, that " faith cometh by hearing : " but if I cannot rely upon the certainty of sense, then the means whereby faith is conveyed is uncertain ; and we may say as St. Paul doth in another case, " then is our preaching " vain, and your faith also is vain. "

Lastly, (to mention no more particulars) as to several things used and practised in the church of Rome, we are on much the safer side, if we should happen to be mistaken about them, than they are, if they should be mistaken : for it is certainly lawful to read the scriptures, and lawful to permit to the people the use of the scriptures in a known tongue ; otherwise we must condemn the apostles and the primitive church for allowing this liberty. It is certainly lawful to have the publick prayers and service of God celebrated in a language which all that join in it can understand. It is certainly lawful to administer the sacrament of the LORD's supper to the people in both kinds ; otherwise the christian church would not have done it for a thousand years. It is certainly lawful, not to worship images, not to pray to angels, or saints, or the blessed virgin ; otherwise the primitive church would not have forborn these practices for

three hundred years, as is acknowledged by those of the church of Rome.

Suppose a man should pray to GOD only, and offer up all his prayers to him only by JESUS CHRIST, without making mention of any other mediator or intercessor with GOD for us, relying herein upon what the apostle says concerning our high priest, JESUS the Son of GOD, Heb. vii. 25. "That he is able "to save them to the uttermost, who come unto GOD "by him," (i. e.) by his mediation and intercession, "since he ever liveth to make intercession for them;" might not a man reasonably hope to obtain of GOD all the blessings he stands in need of, by addressing himself only to him, in the name and by the intercession of that "one mediator between GOD and man, "the man CHRIST JESUS?" Nay, why may not a man reasonably think, that this is both a shorter and more effectual way to obtain our requests, than by turning ourselves to the angels and saints, and importuning them to solicit GOD for us; especially if we should order the matter so, as to make ten times more frequent addresses to these, than we do to GOD and our blessed SAVIOUR, and in comparison of the other, to neglect these. We cannot certainly think any more able to help us and do us good, than the great GOD of heaven and earth, "the GOD" (as the Psalmist styles him) "that heareth prayers," and therefore "unto him should all flesh come." We cannot certainly think any intercessor so powerful and prevalent with GOD, as his only and dearly beloved Son, offering up our prayers to GOD in heaven, by virtue of that most acceptable and invaluable sacrifice, which he offered to him on earth. We cannot surely think, that there is so much goodness any where

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as in GOD; that in any of the angels or saints, or even in the blessed mother of our LORD, there is more mercy and compassion for sinners, and a tenderer sense of our infirmities, than in the SON of GOD, who "is at the right hand of his Father, to appear in the presence of GOD for us." We are sure that GOD always hears the petitions which we put up to him; and so does the SON of GOD, by whom we put them up to the Father, because he also is GOD blessed for evermore. But we are not sure that the angels and saints hear our prayers, because we are sure that they are neither omniscient nor omnipresent, and we are not sure, nor probably certain, that our prayers are made known to them any other way, there being no revelation of GOD to that purpose. We are sure that GOD hath declared himself to be a jealous GOD, and that he will not give his honour to another; and we are not sure but that prayer is part of the honour which is due to GOD alone; and if it were not, we can hardly think but that GOD should be so far from being pleased, with our making so frequent use of those other mediators and intercessors, and from granting our desires the sooner upon that account; that on the contrary we have reason to think, he should be highly offended, when he himself is ready to receive all our petitions, and hath appointed a great mediator to that purpose, to see more addresses made to, and by the angels and saints and blessed virgin, than to himself by his blessed Son; and to see the worship of himself almost jostled out, by the devotion of people to saints and angels, and the blessed mother of our LORD; a thing which he never commanded, and which, so far as appears by scripture, never came into his mind. I have been the longer upon this matter, to shew how unreasonable and needless at the

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best, this more than half part of the religion of the church of Rome is ; and how safely it may be let alone.

But now on the other hand, if they be mistaken in these things, as we can demonstrate from scripture they are, the danger is infinitely great on that side ; for then they oppose an institution of CHRIST, who appointed the sacrament to be received in both kinds ; and they involve themselves in a great danger of the guilt of idolatry, and our common christianity in the scandal and reproach of it ; and this without any necessity, since “ GOD hath required none of these things “ at our hands ;” and after all the bustle which hath been made about them, the utmost they pretend (which yet they are not able to make good) is, that these things may lawfully be done ; and at the same time they cannot deny but that if the church had not enjoined them, they might lawfully be let alone. And can any thing be more unreasonable, than so pertinaciously to insist upon things so hard, I may say impossible to be defended or excused, and which by their own acknowledgment are of no great weight and necessity ; in which we are certainly safe in not doing them, if they should prove lawful ; but if they do not prove so, they are in a most dangerous condition ; so that here is certain safety on the one hand, and the danger of damnation on the other ; which is as great odds as is possible ?

And they must not tell us that they are in no danger, because they are infallible, and cannot be mistaken ; they must prove that point a great deal better than they have yet done, before it can signify any thing either to our satisfaction or their safety.

I might have insisted more largely upon each of these particulars, any one of which is of weight to
incline

incline a man to that religion, which hath such an advantage on it's side; but all of them together make so powerful an argument to an unprejudiced person, as must almost irresistibly determine his choice; for most of the particulars are so evident, that they cannot upon the very mention and proposal of them, be denied to be clear advantages on our side.

And now, to use the words of St. Peter, "I testify unto you, that this is the true grace of God wherein you stand," that the reformed religion which we profess, and which by the goodness of God is by law established in this nation, is the true ancient christianity, "the faith" which was "at first delivered to the saints," and which is conveyed down to us in the writings of the apostles and the evangelists of our LORD and SAVIOUR. "Remember therefore how ye have received and heard; and hold fast; for he is faithful that hath promised," which is the second part of the text; the encouragement which the apostle gives us "to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; he is faithful that hath promised" to give us "his holy Spirit to lead us into all truth, to establish, strengthen and settle us" in the profession of it, to support and comfort us under all trials and temptations, and "to seal us up to the day of redemption; and he is faithful that hath promised" to reward our constancy and fidelity to him and his truth, with "a crown of everlasting life and glory. Wherefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable," and "always abounding in the work of the LORD, forasmuch as you know that your labour shall not be in vain in the LORD; for he is faithful that hath promised;" and "let us provoke one another to charity and good works," which are the great

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great ornament and glory of any religion, and “
 “ much the more, because the day approacheth in
 “ which God will judge the” belief and lives “ of
 “ men by JESUS CHRIST,” not according to the
 imperious and uncharitable dictates of any church,
 but “ according to the gospel of his Son ; to whom
 “ with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour
 “ and glory now and for ever.”

Now the God of peace which brought again from
 the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, through
 the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you
 perfect in every good word and work ; working
 in you that which is pleasing in his sight. And
 the peace of God which passeth all understanding
 keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and
 love of God, and of his Son JESUS CHRIST OUR
 LORD.

S E R M O N LXIV.

The christian life, a life of faith.

2 Cor. V. 7.

For we walk by faith, not by sight.

IN the latter part of the former chapter, the apof-
 tle declares what it was that was the great sup-
 port of Christians, under the persecutions and suffer-
 ings which befel them, viz. the assurance of a blef-
 sed resurrection to another life, verse 14. “ Know-
 “ ing

ing that he which raised up the LORD JESUS, shall raise up us also by JESUS ; for which cause," faith he, verse 16. " we faint not ; but though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day ;" that is, though our bodies, by reason of the hardships and sufferings which we undergo, are continually decaying and declining ; yet our minds grow every day more healthful and vigorous, and gain new strength and resolution, by contemplating the glory and reward of another world, and as it were feeding upon them by faith ; " for our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen."

And he resumes the same argument again at the beginning of this chapter ; " for we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ;" that is, we are firmly persuaded, that when we die, we shall but exchange these earthly and perishing bodies, these houses of clay, for a heavenly mansion, which will never decay nor come to ruin : from whence he concludes, verse 6. " Therefore we are always confident," *ἁρμόντες ἐν πάντοτε*, therefore whatever happens to us, we are always of good courage, and see no reason to be afraid of death ; " knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the LORD ;" that is since our continuance in the body is to our disadvantage, and while we live, we are absent from our happiness ; and when we die, we shall then enter upon the possession of it. That which gives us this confidence and good courage is our faith ; for though we be not actually possessors of this

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this happiness which we speak of, yet we have a firm persuasion of the reality of it, which is enough to support our spirits, and keep up our courage under all afflictions and adversities whatsoever, verse 7; "for we walk by faith, not by sight."

These words come in by way of parenthesis, in which the apostle declares in general, what is the swaying and governing principle of a christian life; not only in case of persecution and affliction, but under all events, and in every condition of human life, and that is, faith; in opposition to sight and present enjoyment: "we walk by faith, and not by sight." "We walk by faith;" whatever principle sways and governs a man's life and actions, he is said to walk and live by it. And as here a Christian is said "to walk by faith," so elsewhere "the just" is said to "live by faith." Faith is the principle which animates all his resolutions and actions.

And "not by sight." The word is, *ὄψις*, which signifies the thing itself in present view and possession, in opposition to a firm persuasion of things future and invisible. Sight is the thing in hand, and faith the thing only in hope and expectation. Sight is a clear view and apprehension of things present and near to us; faith an obscure discovery and apprehension of things at a distance: so the apostle tells us, 2 Cor. xiii. 12. "Now we see through a glass darkly;" this is faith: "but then face to face," this is present sight, as one man sees another face to face; and thus likewise the same apostle distinguisheth betwixt hope and sight, Rom. viii. 24, 25. "Hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man sees, why doth he yet hope for it? but if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Sight is possession and enjoyment; faith is the firm persuasion

persuasion and expectation of a thing ; and this the apostle tells us was the governing principle of a Christian's life, " for we walk by faith, and not by sight ;" from which words I shall observe these three things.

I. That faith is the governing principle, and that which bears the great sway in the life and actions of a Christian ; " we walk by faith ;" that is, we order and govern our lives in the power and virtue of this principle.

II. Faith is a degree of assent inferior to that of sense. This is sufficiently intimated in the opposition betwixt faith and sight. He had said before, that " whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the LORD ;" and gives this as a reason and proof of our absence from the LORD, " for we walk by faith, and not by sight ;" that is, while we are in the body, we do not see and enjoy, but believe and expect ; if we were present with the LORD, then faith would cease, and be turned into sight ; but though we have not that assurance of another world, which we shall have when we come to see and enjoy these things, yet we are firmly persuaded of them.

III. Notwithstanding faith be an inferior degree of assurance, yet 'tis a principle of sufficient power to govern our lives ; " we walk by faith ;" it is such an assurance as hath an influence upon our lives.

I. That faith is the governing principle, and that which bears the great sway in the life and actions of a Christian. " We walk by faith ;" that is, we order and govern our lives in the power and virtue of this principle. A Christian's life consists in obedience to the will of God ; that is, in a readiness to do what he commands, and in a willingness to suffer what he calls us to ; and the great arguments and encourage-

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ments hereto, are such things as are the objects of faith, and not of sense; such things as are absent and future, and not present and in possession. For instance, the belief of an invisible God, of a secret power and providence, that orders and governs all things, that can bless or blast us, and all our designs and undertakings, according as we demean our selves towards him, and endeavour to improve our selves to him; the persuasion of a secret aid and influence always ready at hand, to keep us from evil, and to strengthen and assist us to that which is good; more especially the firm belief and expectation of the happiness of heaven, and the glorious rewards of another world, which though they be now at a distance, and invisible to us, yet being grounded upon the promise of "God that cannot lie," shall certainly be made good.

And this faith, this firm persuasion of absent and invisible things, the apostle to the Hebrews tells us, was the great principle of the piety and virtue of good men from the beginning of the world. This he calls, chap. xi. verse 1. the *ὑπόστασις*, or "the confident expectation of things hoped for, and the proof or evidence of things not seen," viz. a firm persuasion of the being and providence of God, and of the truth and faithfulness of his promises. Such was the faith of Abel, he believed "that there was a God, and that he was a rewarder of those that faithfully serve him." Such was the faith of Noah, who being warned of God, of things at a great distance, and not seen as yet, notwithstanding believed the divine prediction concerning the flood, and prepared an ark: such also was the faith of Abraham, concerning a numerous posterity by Isaac, and the inheritance of the land of Canaan; and such

likewise

likewise was the faith of Moses, he did as firmly believe the invifible God, and the recompence of reward, as if he had beheld them with his eyes.

And of this recompence of reward, we Christians have a much clearer revelation, and much greater affurance, than former ages and generations had; and the firm belief and perfuafion of this, is the great motive and argument to a holy life; “the hope “which is fet before us” of obtaining the happinefs, and the fear of incurring the mifery, of another world. This made the primitive Christians, with fo much patience to bear the fufferings and perfecutions, with fo much conftancy to venture upon the dangers and inconveniencies which the love of God and religion expofed them to.

Under the former difpenfation of the law, though good men received good hopes of the rewards of another life, yet thefe things were but obfcurely revealed to them, and the great inducements to obedience were temporal rewards and punifhments; the promifes of long life, and peace, and plenty, and profperity, in that good land which God had given them, and the threatnings of war, and famine, and peftilence, and being delivered into captivity. But now, under “the gofpel, life and immortality are “brought to light;” and the great arguments that bear fway with Christians, are the promifes of everlafting life, and the threatnings of eternal mifery; and the firm belief and perfuafion of thefe is now the great principle that governs the lives and actions of good men: for what will not men do, that are really perfuaded, that as they do demean themfelves in this world, it will fare with them in the other? that “the wicked fhall go into everlafting punifhment, “and the righteous into life eternal.” I proceed to the

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II. Observation, namely, that faith is a degree of assent, inferior to that of sense, this is intimated in the opposition betwixt faith and sight; “we walk by faith,” and “not by sight;” that is, we believe these things, and are confidently persuaded of the truth of them, though we never saw them, and consequently cannot possibly have that degree of assurance concerning the joys of heaven, and the torments of hell, which those have who enjoy the one and endure the other.

There are different degrees of assurance concerning things arising from the different degrees of evidence we have for them. The highest degree of evidence we have for any thing, is our own sense and experience; and this is so firm and strong, that it is not to be shaken by the utmost pretence of a rational demonstration; men will trust their own senses and experience, against any subtilty of reason whatsoever: but there are inferior degrees of assurance concerning things, as the testimony and authority of persons every way credible: and this assurance we have in this state concerning the things of another world, we believe with great reason, that we have the testimony of God concerning them, which is the highest kind of evidence in itself; and we have all the reasonable assurance we can desire, that God hath testified these things, and this is the utmost assurance which things future and at a distance are capable of.

But yet it is an unreasonable obstinacy to deny, that this falls very much short of that degree of assurance which those persons have concerning these things, who are now in the other world, and have the sense and experience of these things. And this is not only intimated here in the text, in the opposition of faith and sight, but is plainly exprest in other texts

of

of scripture, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10. " We know now
" but in part ; but when that which is perfect is
" come, that which is in part shall be done away."
That degree of knowledge and assurance which we
have in this life is very imperfect, in comparison to
what we shall have hereafter, and ver. 12. " We
" now see as through a glass darkly, *ὡς ἀνίχνυται*,
" as in a riddle," in which there is always a great
deal of obscurity ; all which expressions are certainly
intended by way of abatement and diminution to the
certainty of faith ; because it is plain, by " that which
" is in any part" or " imperfect," the apostle means
faith and hope, which he tells us shall cease, when
" that which is perfect," meaning vision and sight,
is come. We see likewise in experience, that the
faith and hope of the best Christians in this life is ac-
companied with doubting concerning these things,
and all doubting is a degree of uncertainty. But those
blessed souls who are enter'd upon the possession of
glory and happiness, and those miserable wretches
who lye groaning under the wrath of God and the
severity of his justice, cannot possibly, if they would,
have any doubt concerning the truth and reality of
these things.

But however contentious men may dispute against
common sense, this is so plain a truth, that I will not
labour in the farther proof of it ; nor indeed is it
reasonable, while we are in this state, to expect that
degree of assurance concerning the rewards and pu-
nishments of another life, which the sight and sensi-
ble experience of them would give us ; and that upon
these two accounts ;

1. Because our present state will not admit it ; and
2. If it would, it is not reasonable we should
have it.

1. Our present state will not admit it. For while we are in this world, it is not possible we should have that sensible experiment and trial how things are in the other. The things of the other world are remote from us, and far out of sight, and we cannot have any experimental knowledge of them, till we our selves enter into that state. Those who are already past into it know how things are; those happy souls who live in the reviving presence of God, and are possessed of those joys which we cannot now conceive, understand these things in another manner, and have a more perfect assurance concerning them, than it is possible for any man to have in this world; and those wretched and miserable spirits who feel the vengeance of God, and are plunged into the horrors of eternal darkness, do believe upon irresistible evidence, and have other kind of convictions of the reality of that state, and the insupportable misery of it, than any man is capable of in this world.

2. If our present state would admit of this high degree of assurance, it is not fit and reasonable that we should have it. Such an over-powering evidence would quite take away the virtue of faith, and much lessen that of obedience. Put the case that every man, some considerable time before his departure out of this life, were permitted to visit the other world, to assure him how things are there, to view the mansions of the blessed, and to survey the dark and loathsome prisons of the damned, to hear the lamentable outcries of miserable and despairing souls, and to see the inconceivable anguish and torments they are in; after this, what virtue would it be in any man to believe these things? He that had been there and seen them, could not disbelieve them if he would. Faith in this case would not be virtue, but necessity. And there-fore

fore it is observable, that our SAVIOUR doth not pronounce them blessed, who believed his resurrection, upon the forcible evidence of their own senses, but, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." They might be happy in the effects of that faith, but there is no praise, no reward belongs to that faith which is wrought in man by so violent and irresistible an evidence. It was the great commendation of Abraham's faith, that "against hope he believed in hope," he believed the promise of God concerning a thing in itself very improbable: but it is no commendation at all to believe the things which we have seen, because they admit of no manner of dispute; no objection can be offered to shake our assent, unless we will run to the extremity of scepticism; for if we will believe any thing at all, we must yield to the evidence of sense. This does so violently enforce our assent, that there can be no virtue in such a faith.

And as this would take away the virtue of faith, so it would very much lessen that of our obedience. It is hardly to be imagined, that any man who had seen the blessed condition of good men in another world, and been an eye-witness of the intolerable torments of sinners, should ever after be tempted knowingly to do any thing that would deprive him of that happiness, or bring him into that place of torment. Such a sight could not chuse but affect a man as long as he lived; and leave such impressions upon his mind, of the indispensable necessity of a holy life, and of the infinite danger of a wicked course, that we might sooner believe that all men in the world should conspire to kill one another, than that such a man, by consenting to any deliberate act of sin, should willingly throw himself into those flames: no, his mind would

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would be continually haunted with those furies he had seen tormenting sinners in another world, and the fearful shrieks and outcries of miserable souls would be perpetually ringing in his ears; and the man would have so lively and terrible an imagination of the danger he was running himself upon, that no temptation would be strong enough to conquer his fears, and to make him careless of his life and actions, after he had once seen how “fearful a thing it was to fall into the hands of the living God:” so that in this case, the reason of mens obedience would be so violent, that the virtue of it must be very little; for what praise is due to any man, not to do those things which none but a perfect mad man would do? For certainly that man must be besides himself, that could by any temptation be seduced to live a wicked life, after he had seen the state of good and bad men in the other world; the glorious rewards of holiness and virtue, and the dismal event of a vicious and sinful course. God hath designed this life for the trial of our virtue, and the exercise of our obedience; but there would hardly be any place for this, if there were a free and easy passage for us into the other world, to see the true state of things there. What argument would it be of any man’s virtue to forbear sinning after he had been in hell, and seen the miserable end of sinners? But I proceed to the

III. And last observation; namely, that notwithstanding faith be an inferior degree of assent; yet it is a principle of sufficient force and power to govern our lives. “We walk by faith.” Now, that the belief of any thing may have it’s effect upon us, it is requisite that we be satisfied of these two things.

1. Of the certainty, and 2. of the great concernment of the thing. For if the thing be altogether uncer-

uncertain, it will not move us at all, we shall do nothing towards the obtaining of it, if it be good; nor for the avoiding and preventing of it, if it be evil: and if we are certain of the thing, yet if we apprehend it to be of no great moment and concernment, we shall be apt to slight it, as not worth our regard: but the rewards and punishments of another world, which the gospel propounds to our faith, are fitted to work upon our minds, both upon account of the certainty and concernment of them. For,

I. We have sufficient assurance of the truth of these things, as much as we are well capable of in this state. Concerning things future and at a distance, we have the dictates of our reason arguing us into this persuasion from the consideration of the justice of the divine providence, and from the promiscuous and unequal administration of things in this world; from whence wise men in all ages have been apt to conclude, that there will be another state of things after this life, wherein rewards and punishments shall be equally distributed. We have the general consent of mankind in this matter: and to assure us, that these reasonings are true, we have a most credible revelation of these things, God having sent his Son from heaven to declare it to us, and given us a sensible demonstration of the thing, in his resurrection from the dead, and his visible ascension into heaven; so that there is no kind of evidence wanting, that the thing is capable of, but only our own sense and experience of these things, of which we are not capable in this present state. And there is no objection against all this, but what will bring all things into uncertainty, which do not come under our senses, and which we ourselves have not seen.

Nor is there any considerable interest to hinder

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men from the belief of these things, or to make them hesitate about them. For as for the other world, if at last there should prove to be no such thing, our condition after death will be the same with the condition of those who disbelieve these things; because all will be extinguished by death: but if things fall out otherwise (as most undoubtedly they will) and our souls after this life do pass into a state of everlasting happiness or misery, then our great interest plainly lies in preparing ourselves for this state; and there is no other way to secure the great concernments of another world, but by believing those things to be true, and governing all the actions of our lives by this belief. And as for the interests of this life, they are but short and transitory, and consequently of no consideration in comparison of the things which are eternal; (and yet as I have often told you) setting aside the case of persecution for religion, there is no real interest of this world, but it may be as well promoted and pursued to as great advantage, nay, usually, to a far greater, by him that believes these things, and lives accordingly, than by any other person: for the belief of the rewards and punishments of another world is the greatest motive and encouragement to virtue; and as all vice is naturally attended with some temporal inconvenience, so the practice of all christian virtues doth in it's own nature tend both to the welfare of particular persons, and to the peace and prosperity of mankind.

But that which ought to weigh very much with us is, that we have abundantly more assurance of the recompence of another world, than we have of many things in this world, which yet have a greater influence upon our actions, and govern the lives of the most prudent and considerate men. Men generally
hazard

hazard their lives and estates upon terms of greater uncertainty, than the assurance which we have of another world. Men venture to take physick upon probable grounds of the integrity and skill of their physician; and yet the want of either of these may hazard their lives; and men take physick upon greater odds; for it certainly causeth pain and sickness, and doth but uncertainly procure and recover health; the patient is sure to be made sick, but not certain to be made well; and yet the danger of being worse, if not of dying, on the one hand, and the hope of success and recovery on the other, make this hazard and trouble reasonable. Men venture their whole estates to places which they never saw; and that there are such places, they have only the concurrent testimony and agreement of men; nay, perhaps, have only spoken with them that have spoken with those that have been there. No merchant ever insisted upon the evidence of a miracle to be wrought, to satisfy him that there were such places as the East and West-Indies, before he would venture to trade thither: and yet this assurance God hath been pleased to give the world of a state beyond the grave, and of a blessed immortality in another life.

Now what can be the reason that so slender evidence, so small a degree of assurance will serve to encourage men to seek after the things of this world with great care and industry; and yet a great deal more will not suffice to put them effectually upon looking after the great concerns of another world, which are infinitely more considerable? No other reason of this can be given, but that men are partial in their affections towards these things. It is plain they have not the same love for God and religion, which they have for this world and the advantages of it;

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and therefore it is, that a less degree of assurance will engage them to seek after the one, than the other; and yet the reason is much stronger on the other side: for the greater the benefit and good is, which is offered to us, we should be the more eager to seek after it, and should be content to venture upon less probability. Upon excessive odds, a man would venture upon very small hopes; for a mighty advantage, a man would be content to run a great hazard of his labour and pains upon little assurance. Where a man's life is concerned, every suspicion of danger will make a man careful to avoid it. And will nothing affright men from hell, unless God carry them thither, and shew them the place of torments, and the flames of that fire which shall never be quenched?

I do not speak this, as if these things had not abundant evidence; I have shewn that they have; but to convince men, how unreasonable and cruelly partial they are about the concernments of their souls, and their eternal happiness.

2. Supposing these things to be real and certain, they are of infinite concernment to us. For what can concern us more, than that eternal and unchangeable state in which we must be fixt and abide for ever? If so vast a concern will not move us, and have no influence upon the government of our lives and actions, we do not deserve the name of reasonable creatures. What consideration can be set before men, who are not touched with the sense of so great an interest, as that of our happy or miserable being to all eternity? Can we be so solicitous and careful about the concernment of a few days; and is it nothing to us what becomes of us for ever? Are we so tenderly concerned to avoid poverty and disgrace, persecution and suffering in this world; and shall we not much

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more "flee from the wrath which is to come," and endeavour "to escape the damnation of hell?" Are the slight and transitory enjoyments of this world worth so much thought and care? And is an eternal inheritance in the heavens not worth the looking after? As there is no proportion betwixt the things which are temporal and the things which are eternal, so we ought in all reason to be infinitely more concerned for the one than for the other.

The proper inference from all this discourse is, that we would endeavour, to strengthen in ourselves this great principle of a christian life, the belief of another world, by representing to ourselves all those arguments and considerations which may confirm us in this persuasion. The more reasonable our faith is, and the surer grounds it is built upon, the more firm it will abide, when it comes to the trial, against all the impressions of temptations and assaults of persecution. If our faith of another world be only a strong imagination of these things, "so soon as tribulation ariseth, it will wither; because it hath no root in itself." Upon this account the apostle so often exhorts Christians, to endeavour "to be established in the truth, to be rooted and grounded in the faith," that when persecution comes, they may "continue stedfast and unmovable." This firmness of our belief will have a great influence upon our lives; if we be "stedfast and unmovable" in our persuasion of these things, we shall be "abundant in the work of the LORD." The apostle joins these together, 1 Cor. xv. 58. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, forasmuch as ye know your labour shall not be in vain in the LORD." Stedfast and unmovable, in what? In the belief of a
blessed

blest resurrection; which the more firmly any man believes, the more active and industrious will he be in the work and service of God.

And that our faith may have a constant and powerful influence upon our lives, we should frequently revolve in our minds the thoughts of another world, and of that vast eternity which we shall shortly launch into. The great disadvantage of the arguments fetched from another world, is this, that these things are at a distance from us, and not sensible to us, and therefore we are not apt to be so affected with them; present and sensible things weigh down all other considerations. And therefore to balance this disadvantage, we should often have these thoughts in our minds, and inculcate upon ourselves the certainty of these things, and the infinite concernment of them; we should reason thus with ourselves; if these things be true, and will certainly be, why should they not be to me, as if they were actually present? Why should not I always live, as if heaven were open to my view, and "I saw JESUS standing at the right hand of God," with crowns of glory in his hands, ready to be set upon the heads of all those who continue faithful and obedient to him? And why should I not be as much afraid to commit any sin, as if "hell were naked before me," and I saw the astonishing miseries of the damned?

Thus we should, by frequent meditation, represent these great things to ourselves, and bring them nearer to our minds, and oppose to the present temptations of sense the great and endless happiness and misery of the other world. And if we would but thus exercise ourselves about "the things which are not seen," and make eternity familiar to ourselves, by a frequent meditation of it, we should be very little moved with present

present and sensible things; we should walk and live by faith, as the men of the world do by sense, and be more serious and earnest in the pursuit of our great and everlasting interest, than they are in the pursuit of sensual enjoyments, and should make it the great business of this present and temporal life, to secure a future and eternal happiness.

S E R M O N L X V.

The danger of apostasy from the true religion.

H E B. X. 38.

But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

THE great design of this epistle, (whoever was the author of it; which I shall not now enquire into) is plainly this, to confirm the Jews, who were but newly converted to christianity, in the steadfast profession of that faith, which they had embraced, and to arm them against that temptation, which Christians were then exposed to, viz. the fierce and cruel persecutions, which threatened those of that profession.

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And to this purpose, he represents to them the excellency of that religion, above any other former revelation

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velation that God hath made of himself to the world, both in respect of the author and revealer of it, who was the Son of God, and in respect of the revelation itself; which, as it contains better, and more perfect directions for a good life, so likewise more powerful and effectual motives thereto, better promises, and more terrible threatnings, than were annexed to the observation of the Jewish law, or clearly and certainly discoverable by the light of nature. From these considerations, he earnestly persuades them, all along throughout this epistle, to continue constant in the profession of this faith, and not to suffer themselves to be frightened out of it by the terror of persecution; chap. ii. ver. 1. "Therefore we ought to give the
" more earnest heed to the things which we have
" heard, lest at any time we should let them slip;" and chap. iv. 1. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us, of entering into his rest, any of
" you should come short of it;" and verse 23. of this chapter, "Let us hold fast the profession of our
" faith, without wavering;" and to encourage them to constancy, he sets before them the glorious rewards and recompences of the gospel, verse 35.
"Cast not away therefore your confidence, τὴν παρ-
" ῥησίαν ὑμῶν, your free and open profession of
" christianity, which hath great recompence of re-
" ward."

And then on the other hand, to deter them from apostasy from this profession, he represents to them the horrible danger of it, here in the text, "but if
" any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

I shall briefly explain the words, and then prosecute that which I mainly intended in them. "If any man
" draw back," εἰάν ὑποσείληται: these words, with
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the foregoing, are cited out of the prophet Habakuk, chap. ii. ver. 3, 4. and they are cited by the apostle, according to the translation of the LXXII. which differs somewhat from the Hebrew; and the difference ariseth from the various readings of the Hebrew word, which is rendered by the LXXII, "to draw back;" but by the change of a letter signifies "to be lifted up," as we render it in the prophet; but however that be, the apostle follows the translation of the LXXII, and accommodates it to his purpose. *Ἐὰν ὑποσείληται*, "if any man draw back;" the word signifies to keep back, to withdraw, to sneak and slink away out of fear, to fail, or faint in any enterprize: and thus this word is render'd in the new testament, Acts xx. 20. *ὃδὲν ὑπετάλαμην*, "I did not withhold," or "keep back any thing that was profitable for you;" and so it is said of St. Peter, Gal. ii. 12. "ὕπεσεν ἑαυτὸν," "he slunk away," or "withdrew himself, fearing them of the circumcision;" and the Hebrew word which is here render'd by the LXXII. "to draw back," is render'd elsewhere *ἐκλείπειν*, which is "to fail" or "faint;" from all which it appears, that by "drawing back," the apostle here means, means quitting their profession of christianity, and slinking out of it, for fear of suffering for it.

"My soul shall have no pleasure in him:" these words are plainly a *μῆτις*, and less is said than is meant; for the meaning is, that God will be extremely displeased with them, and punish them very severely. The like figure to this, you have Psal. 4. "Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in wickedness," which in the next verse is explained, by his hatred and detestation of those who are guilty of it, "thou hatest all the workers of iniquity." So

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that the plain sense of the words is this, that apostasy from the profession of God's true religion, is a thing highly provoking to him, and will be most severely punish'd by him.

In speaking to this argument, I shall consider these four things.

I. The nature of this sin of apostasy from religion.

II. The several steps and degrees of it.

III. The heinousness of it.

IV. The great danger of it, and the terrible punishment it exposeth men to. And when I have spoken to these, I shall conclude all with a short exhortation, "to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

I. We will consider the nature of this sin of apostasy from religion; and it consists in forsaking or renouncing the profession of religion, whether it be by an open declaration in words, or a virtual declaration of it by our actions; for it comes all to one in the sight of God, and the different manner of doing it, does not alter the nature of the thing. He indeed that renounceth religion, by an open declaration in words, offers the greatest and boldest defiance to it: but he is likewise an apostate, who silently withdraws himself from the profession of it, who quits it for his interest, or for fear disowns it, and sneaks out of the profession of it, and forsakes the communion of those who own it. Thus Demas was an apostate, in quitting christianity for some worldly interest. "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world," saith St. Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 10. And those whom our SAVIOUR describes, Matt. xiii. 20, 21. "Who received the word into stony ground," were apostates out of fear, "they heard the word, and

“ with joy receiv’d it, but having no root in them-
“ selves, they endured but for a while, and when tri-
“ bulation and persecution ariseth because of the
“ word, presently they fall off.”

And there is likewise a partial apostasy from christianity, when some fundamental article of it is denied, whereby, in effect and by consequence, the whole christian faith is overthrown. Of this Hymeneus and Philetus were guilty, of whom the apostle says, that they “ erred concerning the truth, saying
“ that the resurrection was past already, and thereby
“ overthrew the faith of some,” 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18. that is, they turned the resurrection into an allegory, and did thereby really destroy a most fundamental article of the christian religion.

So that to make a man an apostate, it is not necessary that a man should solemnly renounce his baptism, and declare christianity to be false ; there are several other ways whereby a man may bring himself under this guilt, as by a silent quitting of his religion, and withdrawing himself from the communion of all that profess it ; by denying an essential doctrine of christianity ; by undermining the great end and design of it, by teaching doctrines which directly tend to encourage men in impenitence, and a wicked course of life, nay, to authorise all manner of impiety and vice, in telling men that whatever they do they cannot sin ; for which, the primitive Christians did look upon the Gnosticks, as no better than apostates from christianity ; and though they retained the name of Christians, yet not to be truly and really so. And there is likewise a partial apostasy from the christian religion ; of which I shall speak under the

II. Head I proposed, which was, to consider the several sorts and degrees of apostasy. The highest of

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all, is the renouncing and forsaking of christianity, or of some essential part of it, which is a virtual apostasy from it : but there are several tendencies towards this, which they who are guilty of are in some degree guilty of this sin. As,

1. Indifferency in religion, and want of all sort of concernment for it ; when a man, though he never quitted his religion, yet is so little concerned for it, that a very small occasion or temptation would make him do it ; he is contented to be reckoned in the number of those who profess it, so long as it is the fashion, and he finds no great inconvenience by it : but is so indifferent in his mind about it, (like Gallio, “ who minded none of those things”) that he can turn himself into any other shape, when his interest requires it ; so that though he never actually deserted it, yet he is a kind of apostate, in the preparation and disposition of his mind : and to such persons, that title which Solomon gives to some, may fitly enough be applied, they are “ backsliders in heart.”

2. Another tendency to this sin, and a great degree of it, is withdrawing from the publick marks and testimonies of the profession of religion, by forsaking the assemblies of Christians for the worship and service of GOD, to withdraw ourselves from those, for fear of danger or suffering, is a kind of denial of our religion. And this was the case of some in the apostles time, when persecution grew hot, and the open profession of christianity dangerous ; to avoid this danger, many appeared not in the assemblies of Christians, for fear of being observed and brought into trouble for it. This the apostle taxeth some for, in this chapter, and speaketh of it as a letting go our profession, and a kind of deserting of christianity, ver. 23, 25. “ Let us hold fast
“ the

“ the profession of our faith without wavering, not
“ forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as
“ the manner of some is.” He doth not say, they had
quitted their profession, but they had but a loose hold
of it, and were silently stealing away from it.

3. A light temper of mind, which easily receives
impressions from those who lye in wait to deceive
and seduce men from the truth. When men are not
well rooted and established in religion, they are apt
“ to be inviegled by the crafty insinuations of sedu-
“ cers, to be moved with every wind of doctrine,”
and “ to be easily shaken in mind,” by every trifling
piece of sophistry, that is confidently obtruded upon
them for a weighty argument.

Now this is a temper of mind which disposeth
men to apostasy, and renders them an easy prey to
every one that takes a pleasure and pride in making
profelytes. It is true indeed, a man should always
have a mind ready to entertain truth, when it is fair-
ly proposed to him: but the main things of religion
are so plainly revealed, and lye so obvious to every
ordinary capacity, that every man may discern them:
and when he hath once entertained them, ought to
be stedfast and unmovable in them, and not suffer
himself to be whiffled out of them by an insignifi-
cant noise about the infallibility of a visible church;
much less ought he to be moved by any man’s un-
charitableness and positiveness, in damning all that are
not of his mind.

There are some things so very plain, not only in
scripture, but to the common reason of mankind, that
no subtlety of discourse, no pretended authority, or
even infallibility of any church, ought to stagger us
in the least about them; as that we ought not, or
cannot believe any thing in direct contradiction to
sense

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sense and reason ; that the people ought to read and study the holy scriptures ; and to serve God and pray to him in a language which they understand ; that they ought to receive the sacrament as our SAVIOUR instituted and appointed it, that is, in both kinds ; that it can neither be our duty, nor lawful to do that which God hath forbidden, as he hath done the worship of images in the second commandment, as plainly as words can do it. Upon any one of these points, a man would fix his foot, and stand alone against the whole world.

4. Another degree of apostasy is, a departure from the purity of the christian doctrine and worship, in a gross and notorious manner. This is a partial, though not a total apostasy from the christian religion, and there have been, and are still some in the world who are justly charged with this degree of apostasy from religion ; namely such, as though they retain and profess the belief of all the articles of the christian faith, and worship “ the only true God,” and “ him whom he hath sent, JESUS CHRIST ;” yet have greatly perverted the christian religion, by superinducing, and adding new articles of faith, and gross corruptions and superstitions in worship, and imposing upon men the belief and practice of these, as necessary to salvation. And St. Paul is my warrant for this censure, who chargeth those who addeth to the christian religion the necessity of circumcision, and observing the law of Moses, and thereby perverted the gospel of CHRIST, as guilty in some degree of apostasy from Christianity ; for he calls it, preaching another gospel, Gal. i. 7, 8. “ There be
“ some that trouble you, and would pervert the
“ Gospel of CHRIST : but though we, or an angel
“ from heaven, preach any other gospel to you, than
“ that

“ that which we have preached, let him be accursed.” And those who were seduced by these teachers, he chargeth them with having in some sort quitted the gospel of CHRIST, and embraced another gospel, ver. 6. “ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of CHRIST, unto another gospel.” So that they who thus pervert and corrupt the christian doctrine or worship, are plainly guilty of a partial apostasy from christianity ; and they who quit the purity of the christian doctrine and worship, and go over to the communion of those who have thus perverted christianity, are in a most dangerous state, and, in the judgment of St. Paul, are in some sort removed unto another gospel. I shall now proceed in the

III. Place, to consider the heinousness of this sin. And it will appear to be very heinous, if we consider, what an affront it is to GOD, and how great a contempt of him. When GOD hath revealed his will to mankind, and sent no less person than “ his own Son” out of his own bosom to do it, and hath given such testimonies to him from heaven, by “ signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost ;” when he hath transmitted down to us, so faithful a record of this revelation, and of the miracles wrought to confirm it, in the books of the holy scriptures ; and when we our selves have so often declared our firm belief of this revelation : yet after all this to fall from it, and deny it, or any part of it, or to embrace doctrines and practices plainly contrary to it ; this certainly cannot be done without the greatest affront and contempt of the testimony of GOD himself ; for it is in effect, and by interpretation, to declare, that either we do not believe what GOD says, or that we do not fear what he

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he can do. So St. John tells us, 1 ep. v. 10.
“ He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar,
“ because he believeth not the record which God
“ hath given of his Son.”

And all along in this epistle to the Hebrews, the apostle sets himself to aggravate this sin ; calling it
“ an evil heart of unbelief, to depart from the living
“ God,” chap. iii. 12. And he frequently calls it
so, *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, and by way of eminency, as being
of all sins the greatest and most heinous, chap. x. 26.
“ If we sin wilfully, after we have received the know-
“ ledge of the truth.” That the apostle here speaks
of the sin of apostasy, is plain from the whole scope
of his discourse ; for having exhorted them before,
ver. 23. “ to hold fast the profession of their faith
“ without wavering, not forsaking the assembling
“ of themselves together,” he immediately adds,
“ for if we sin wilfully, after we have received the
“ knowledge of the truth ;” that is, if we fall off
from christianity, after we have embraced it. And
chap. xii. 1. “ Let us lay aside every weight, and the
“ sin which so easily besets us,” that is, the great
sin of apostasy from religion, to which they were
then so strongly tempted by that fierce persecution
which attended it ; and therefore he adds, “ let us
“ run with patience the race which is set before us,”
that is, let us arm ourselves with patience against the
sufferings we are like to meet with in our christian
course. To oppose the truth, and resist the clear
evidence of it, is a great sin, and men are justly con-
demned for it. John iii. 19. “ This is the condem-
“ nation, that light is come into the world, and men
“ loved darkness rather than light :” but to desert
the truth after we have been convinced of it, to fall
off from the profession of it, after we have embraced

it ;

it, is a much greater sin. Opposition to the truth may proceed, in a great measure, from ignorance and prejudice, which is a great extenuation; and therefore St. Paul tells us, that after all his violent persecution of christianity, "he found mercy, because he did it ignorantly and in unbelief." To revolt from the truth, after we have made profession of it, "after we have known the way of righteousness, to turn from the holy commandment;" this is the great aggravation. The apostle makes wilfulness, an usual ingredient into the sin of apostasy, "if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth."

And as this sin is one of the greatest affronts to God, so it is the highest and most effectual disparagement of religion: for it is not so much considered, what the enemies of religion speak against it, because "they speak evil of the things which they knew not," and of which they have had no trial and experience; but he that falls off from religion, after he hath made profession of it, declares to the world, that he hath tried it, and dislikes it, and pretends to leave it, because he hath not found that truth and goodness in it which he expected, and upon long experience of it, sees reason to prefer another religion before it. So that nothing can be more despightful to religion than this, and more likely to bring it into contempt; and therefore the apostle (ver. 29th of this chapter) calls it a "trampling under foot the Son of God, and making the blood of the covenant a profane thing, and offering despite to the spirit of grace:" for we cannot put a greater scorn upon the Son of God, who revealed this doctrine to the world; nor upon his blood, which was shed to confirm and seal the truth of it; and upon

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the Holy Ghost, who came down in miraculous gifts to give testimony to it; than notwithstanding all this, to renounce this doctrine, and to forsake this religion. But we shall yet farther see the heinousness of this sin, in the terrible punishment it exposeth men to; which was the

IV. And last thing I proposed to consider. And this is represented to us in a most terrible manner, not only in this epistle, but in other places of scripture. This sin is placed in the highest rank of pardonable sins, and next to the sin against the Holy Ghost, which our SAVIOUR declares to be absolutely unpardonable. And indeed the scripture speaks very doubtfully of the pardonableness of this sin, as being near akin to that against the Holy Ghost, being said to be an "offering despite to the spirit of grace." In the 6th chapter of this epistle, ver. 4, 5, 6. the apostle speaks in a very severe manner, concerning the state of those, who had apostatized from christianity, after the solemn profession of it in baptism; "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened" (that is baptized) "and have tasted of the heavenly gift," (that is regeneration) "and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," (that is, have been instructed in the christian religion, and endowed with the miraculous powers of the gospel age, for the Jews used to call the age of the Messias, *seculum futurum*, or, the world to come) "it is impossible for those to be renewed again unto repentance;" where the least we can understand by impossible, is, that it is extremely difficult; for so the word impossible is sometimes used; as when our SAVIOUR says, "it is impossible for a rich man to enter into the
king-

"kingdom of heaven." And ch. x. 26. the apostle speaking of the same thing, says, "if we sin willfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin;" that is, they who renounce christianity, since they reject the only way of expiation, "there remains no more sacrifice for their sins."

St. Peter likewise expresseth himself very severely concerning this sort of persons, 2 epist. ii. 20, 21. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST," (that is, after they have been brought from heathenism to christianity) "they are entangled therein again, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." He seems loth to say how sad the condition of such persons is; but this he tells them, that it is much worse than when they were heathens before; and he gives the reason, "for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." And St. John calls this sin of apostasy, the "sin unto death;" and though he do not forbid Christians to pray for them that are guilty of it; yet he will not say, that they should pray for them. 1 epist. v. 16. "If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life, for them that sin not unto death; there is a sin unto death, I do not say, that he shall pray for it." Now that by this "sin unto death," the apostle means apostasy from the christian religion to idolatry, is most probable from what follows, ver. 18. "we know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not," (that is, this sin unto death) "but he that

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“ is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not,” (that is, he is preserved from idolatry, unto which the devil had seduced so great a part of mankind) “ and we know that we are of God, and the whole world, ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ καί ται, is under the dominion of that wicked one,” (viz. the devil, whom the scripture elsewhere calls “ the God of this world ;) and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true,” (that is, hath brought us from the worship of false Gods, to the knowledge and worship of the true God ;) and then he concludes, “ little children, keep your selves from idols ; ” which caution hath no manner of dependance upon what went before ; unless we understand “ the sin unto death,” in this sense ; and it is the more probable, that it is so to be understood, because apostasy is so often in this epistle to the Hebrews, called “ the sin,” by way of eminency, as it is here by St. John, “ whosoever is born of God sinneth not.”

So that at the very best, the scripture speaks doubtfully of the pardon of this sin ; however, that the punishment of it, unrepented of, shall be very dreadful. It seems to be mildly exprest here in the text, “ If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him : ” But it is the more severe, for being exprest so mildly, according to the intention of the figure here used ; and therefore in the next words, this expression of God’s taking no pleasure in such persons, is explained by their utter ruin and perdition ; “ but we are not of them that draw back unto perdition.” And in several parts of this epistle, there are very severe passages to this purpose ; ch. ii. 2, 3. “ If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, “ and

“ and every transgression and disobedience received
“ a just recompence of reward ; how shall we ef-
“ cape, if we neglect so great salvation ? ” And ch.
x. 26, 27. “ If we sin wilfully, after we have re-
“ ceived the knowledge of the truth, there remain-
“ eth no more sacrifice for sin ; but a certain fearful
“ looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation,
“ which shall devour the adversary. He that de-
“ spised Moses law, died without mercy, under two
“ or three witnesses ; of how much sorer punishment,
“ suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, that hath
“ trodden under foot the Son of God ! &c. For
“ we know him who hath said, vengeance is mine,
“ I will recompense, saith the LORD : ” and again,
“ the LORD shall judge his people. It is a fearful
“ thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”
What can be more severe and terrible than these ex-
pressions ?

I will mention but one text more, and that is Rev.
xxi. 8. where, in the catalogue of great sinners, those
who apostatize from religion, out of fear, do lead
the van ; “ he that overcometh shall inherit all
“ things,” (which is elsewhere in this book exprest,
by continuing faithful unto death.) “ He that o-
“ vercometh, shall inherit all things ; and I will be
“ his God, and he shall be my son : but the fearful,
“ and unbelieving, and the abominable, and whore-
“ mongers, and forcerers, and idolaters, and all li-
“ ars, shall have their part in the lake, which burn-
“ eth with fire and brimstone, which is the second
“ death.” The fearful, and unbelievers, and liars ;
that is, they who out of fear who relapse into fidelity,
and abide not in the truth, shall be reckoned in the
first rank of offenders, and be punished accordingly.

And thus I have done with the four things I pro-
pounded

pounded to speak to, from these words; the nature of apostasy; the several steps and degrees of it; the heinous nature of this sin; the danger of it, and the terrible punishment it exposeth men to.

And is there any need now, to exhort men "to hold fast the profession of faith," when the danger of drawing back is so evident, and so terrible? Or is there any reason and occasion for it? Certainly there is no great danger amongst us, of mens apostatizing from christianity, and turning Jews, or Turks, or Heathens; I do not think there is, but yet for all that, we are not free from the danger of apostasy; there is great danger not of mens apostatizing from one religion to another, but from religion to infidelity and atheism; and of this worst kind of apostasy of all other, I wish the age we live in had not afforded us too many instances. It is greatly to be lamented, that among those who have professed christianity, any should be found, that should make it their endeavour to undermine the great principles of all religion; the belief of a God, and his providence; and of the immortality of the souls of men; and a state of rewards and punishments after this life; and to bring the most serious matters in the world into contempt, and to turn them into jest and raillery. This is not only a renouncing of christianity, the religion which God hath revealed, but even of the religion which is born with us, and the principles and notions which God hath planted in every man's mind; this is an impiety of the first magnitude, and not to be mentioned without grief and horror; and this, it is to be feared, hath had a great hand in those great calamities which our eyes have seen; and I pray God it do not draw down still more and greater judgments upon this nation: but I hope there are none here that

need

need to be cautioned against this horrible impiety, and highest degree of "apostasy from the living God:" that which people are much more in danger of, is apostasy from the purity of the christian doctrine and worship, so happily recovered by a regular reformation, and established amongst us by all the authority that laws, both ecclesiastical and civil, can give it; and which, in truth, is no other, than the ancient and primitive christianity; I say, a defection from this, to those gross errors and superstitions, which the reformation had pared off, and freed us from. I do not say, that this is a total apostasy from christianity; but it is a partial apostasy and defection, and a very dangerous one; and that those, who, "after they have received the knowledge of the truth," fall off from it into those errors and corruptions, are highly guilty before God, and their condition certainly worse, and more dangerous, than of those who are brought up in those errors and superstitions, and never knew better; for there are terrible threatnings in scripture against those who fall away from the truth, which they once embraced, and were convinced of; "if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, &c." and, "if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

God considers every man's advantages and opportunities of knowledge, and their disadvantages likewise; and makes all reasonable allowances for them; and for men to continue in the errors they have been always brought up in; or, which comes much to one, in errors which they were led into by principles early infused into them, before they were in any measure competent judges of those matters; I say, for such persons to continue in those errors, and to oppose and reject the contrary truths, against which,
by

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by their education, they have received so strong and violent a prejudice, this may be in a great degree excusable, and find pardon with God, upon a general repentance for all sins, both known and unknown, and cannot be reasonably charged with the guilt of this great sin of apostasy: but not to abide in the truth, after we have entertained and professed it, having sufficient means and advantages of knowing it, hath no excuse.

I would not be rash in condemning particular persons of any society or communion of Christians, provided they be sincerely devout, and just, and sober, to the best of their knowledge; I had much rather leave them to God, whose mercies are great, than to pass an uncharitable censure upon them, as to their eternal state and condition: but the case is far otherwise, where the opportunities of knowledge are afforded to men, and "men love darkness rather than light;" for they who have the means and advantages of "knowing their master's will," are answerable to God as if they had known it; because if they had not been grossly negligent, and wanting to themselves, they might have known it.

And this, I fear, is the case of the generality of those who have been bred up to years of consideration and choice in the reformed religion, and forsake it; because they do it without sufficient reason, and there are invincible objections against it: they do it without sufficient reason; because every one amongst us knows, or may know upon very little enquiry, that we hold all the articles of the faith, which are contained in the ancient creeds of the christian church, and into which all Christians are baptized; that we inculcate upon men the necessity of a good life, and of sincere repentance, and perfect contrition for our

sins,

sins, such as is followed with real reformation and amendment of our lives, and that without this no man can be saved by any device whatsoever.

Now what reason can any man have to question, whether he may be saved in that faith which saved the first Christians, and by believing the twelve articles of the apostles creed, though he cannot swallow the twelve articles which are added to it in the creed of pope Pius IV. every one of which, besides many and great corruptions and superstitions in worship, are so many and invincible objections against the communion of the Roman church, as I could particularly shew, if it had not been already done, in so many learned treatises upon this argument? What is there then, that should move any reasonable man to forsake the communion of our church, and to quit the reformed religion?

There are three things chiefly with which they endeavour to amuse and affright weaker minds.

1. A great noise of infallibility, which they tell us is so excellent a means to determine and put an end to all differences. To which I shall at present only object this prejudice; that there are not wider and hotter differences among us, about any thing whatsoever, than are amongst them, about this admirable means of ending all differences; as, where this infallibility is seated, that men may know how to have recourse to it, for the ending of differences.

2. They endeavour to fright men with the danger of schism. But every man knows, that the guilt of schism lyes at their door, who impose sinful articles of communion; and not upon them, who for fear of offending against God, cannot submit to those articles; which we have done, and still are ready to make good,

SERM. to be the case betwixt us and the church of Rome.
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3. The terrible engine of all is, their positive and confident damning of all that live and die out of the communion of their church. This I have fully spoken to upon another occasion, and therefore shall only say at present, that every man ought to have better thoughts of GOD, than to believe, that he, "who delighteth not in the death of sinners," and "would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth," will confirm the sentence of such uncharitable men, as take upon them to condemn men for those things, for which our SAVIOUR in his gospel condemns no man. And of all things in the world, one would think, that the uncharitableness of any church should be an argument to no man, to run into it's communion.

I shall conclude with the apostle's exhortation, ver. 23. of this chapter, "let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; and provoke one another to charity and good works; and so much the more, because the day approacheth, in which GOD will judge the faith and lives of men, by JESUS CHRIST, according to his gospel."

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Of self-denial and suffering for CHRIST'S
fake.

M A T T H. XVI. 24.

Then said JESUS unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

THEN said JESUS to his disciples," that is, S E R M.
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upon occasion of his former discourse with The first
sermon on
this text.
them, wherein he had acquainted them with his approaching passion, that he must shortly go up to Jerusalem, and there suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and at last be put to death by them; "then said JESUS unto his disciples, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

"If any man will come after me, or follow me;" that is, if any man will be my disciple, and undertake the profession of my religion; if any man chuse and resolve to be a Christian; he must be so upon these terms, he must "deny himself, and take up his cross" and follow me;" he must follow me in self-denial and suffering.

In the handling of these words, I shall do these four things.

I. I shall consider the way and method which our SAVIOUR useth in making profelytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of

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force and violence to compel them to the profession of his religion ; but fairly offers it to their consideration and choice, and tells them plainly upon what terms they must be his disciples ; and if they be contented and resolved to submit to these terms, well ; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer ; for “ they cannot be his disciples.”

II. I shall endeavour to explain this duty of self-denial, expressed in these words, “ let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.”

III. I shall consider the strict and indispensable obligation of it, whenever we are called to it, “ without this we cannot be CHRIST’s disciples ; if any man will come after me,” or “ be my disciple, let him deny himself.”

IV. I shall endeavour to vindicate the reasonableness of this precept, of self-denial and suffering for CHRIST, which at first appearance may seem to be so very harsh and difficult ; and I shall go over these particulars as briefly as I can.

I. We will consider the way and method which our SAVIOUR here useth in making profelytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of force and violence to compel men to the profession of his religion ; but fairly proposeth it to their consideration and choice, telling them plainly upon what terms they must be his disciples ; if they like them, and are content, and resolved to submit to them, well ; he is willing to receive them, and own them for his disciples ; if not, it is in vain to follow him any longer : for “ they cannot be his disciples.” As on the one hand, he offers them no worldly preferment and advantage, to entice them into his religion, and to tempt them outwardly to profess what they do not inwardly believe ; so on the other hand,

he does not haul and drag them by force, and awe them by the terrors of torture and death to sign the christian faith, though most undoubtedly true, and to confess with their mouths, and subscribe with their hands, what they do not believe in their hearts. He did not obtrude his sacraments upon them, and plunge them into the water to baptize them, whether they would or no, and thrust the sacrament of bread into their mouths ; as if men might be worthy receivers of that blessed sacrament, whether they receive it willingly or no.

Our blessed SAVIOUR, the author and founder of our religion, made use of none of these ways of violence, so contrary to the nature of man, and of all religion, and especially of christianity, and fitted only to make men hypocrites, but not converts ; he only says, “ if any man will be my disciple ;” he useth no arguments, but such as are spiritual, and proper to work upon the minds and consciences of men. For as his “ kingdom was not of this world,” so neither are the motives and arguments to induce men to be his subjects, taken from this world ; but from the endless rewards and punishments of another. “ The weapons” which he made use of, to subdue men to the obedience of faith, were not “ carnal ;” and yet they were “ mighty through God,” to conquer the obstinacy and infidelity of men. This great and infallible teacher, who certainly came from God, all that he does, is to propose his religion to men, with such evidence and such arguments as are proper to convince men of the truth and goodness of it, and to persuade men to embrace it ; and he acquaints them likewise with all the worldly disadvantages of it, and the hazards and sufferings that would attend it ; and now, if upon full consideration, they will make his religion

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religion their free choice, and become his disciples, he is willing to receive them ; if they will not, he understands the nature of religion better, than to go about to force it upon men, whether they will or no.

II. I shall endeavour to explain this duty or precept of self-denial, expressed in these words, “ let him “ deny himself, and take up his cross.” These are difficult terms, for a man “ to deny himself, and “ take up his own cross,” that is, willingly to submit to all those sufferings which the malice of men may inflict for the sake of CHRIST and his religion. For this expression of “ taking up one’s cross,” is a plain allusion to the Roman custom, which was this, that he that was condemned to be crucified, was to take his cross upon his shoulders, and to carry it to the place of execution ; this the Jews made our SAVIOUR to do, as we read, John xix. 17. till that being ready to faint under it, and lest he should die away before he was nailed to the cross, they compelled Simon of Cyrene to carry it for him, as is declar’d by the other evangelists : and yet he tells them, “ they that will be his disciples must follow him, “ bearing their own cross,” that is, being ready (if God call them to it) to submit to the like sufferings for him and his truth, which he was shortly to undergo for the truth, and for their sakes.

But though these terms seem very hard, yet they are not unreasonable, as I shall shew in the conclusion of this discourse. Some indeed have made them so by extending this self-denial too far, attending more to the latitude of the words, than to the meaning and scope of our SAVIOUR’s discourse : for there is no doubt, but that there are a great many things, which may properly enough be called self-denial, which yet our SAVIOUR never intended to oblige Christians to.

It

It is no doubt, great self-denial, for a man, without any necessity, to deny himself the necessary supports of life; for a man to starve and make away himself: but no man certainly ever imagined, that our SAVIOUR ever intended by this precept to enjoin this kind of self-denial.

It is plain then, that there is no reason nor necessity to extend this precept of our SAVIOUR, concerning self-denial, to every thing that may properly enough be called by that name; and therefore this precept must be limited by the plain scope and intendment of our SAVIOUR's discourse; and no man can argue thus; such a thing is self-denial, therefore our SAVIOUR requires it of his disciples: for our SAVIOUR doth not here require all kinds of self-denial; but limits it by his discourse to one certain kind, beyond which self-denial is no duty by virtue of this text; and therefore for our clearer understanding of this precept of self-denial, I shall do these two things:

First, remove some sorts of self-denial, which are instanced in by some, as intended in this precept.

Secondly, I shall shew what kind of self-denial that is, which our SAVIOUR here intends.

First, there are several things brought under this precept of self-denial, which were never intended by our SAVIOUR. I shall instance in two or three things, which are most frequently insisted upon, and some of them by very devout and well-meaning men; as, that in matters of faith, we should deny and renounce our own senses and our reason; nay, that we should be content to renounce our own eternal happiness, and be willing to be damned for the glory of God, and the good of our brethren. But all these are so apparently and grossly unreasonable, that

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that it is a wonder that any one should ever take them for instances of that self-denial which our SAVIOUR requires; especially considering, that in all his discourse of self-denial, he does not so much as glance at any of these instances, or any thing like to them.

1. Some comprehend under self-denial, the denying and renouncing our own senses in matters of faith. And if this could be made out to be intended by our SAVIOUR in this precept, we needed not dispute any of the other instances. For he that renounceth the certainty of sense, so as not to believe what he sees, may after this renounce and deny any thing. For the evidence of sense is more clear and unquestionable than that of faith, as the scripture frequently intimates; as John xx. 29. where our SAVIOUR reproves Thomas, for refusing to believe his resurrection, upon any less evidence than that of sense; "Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed;" which plainly supposeth the evidence of sense to be the highest and clearest degree of evidence. So likewise that of St. Paul, 2 Cor. v. 7. "We walk by faith, and not by sight;" where the evidence of faith, as that which is more imperfect and obscure, is opposed to that of sight, as more clear and certain. So that to believe any article of faith, in contradiction to the clear evidence of sense, is contrary to the very nature of assent, which always yields to the greatest and clearest evidence.

Besides that our belief of religion is at last resolved into the certainty of sense: so that by renouncing that, we destroy and undermine the very foundation of our faith. One of the plainest and principal proofs of the being of God (which is the first and funda-

mental article of all religion) relies upon the certainty of sense, namely, the frame of this visible world, by the contemplation whereof we are led to the acknowledgment of the invisible author of it. So St. Paul tells us, Rom. i. 20. that "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead."

And the great external evidence of the christian religion, I mean miracles, is at last resolved into the certainty of sense, without which we can have no assurance that any miracle was wrought for the confirmation of it.

And the knowledge likewise of the christian faith, is conveyed to us by our senses; the evidence whereof if it be uncertain, takes away all certainty of faith. "How shall they believe," saith St. Paul, Rom. x. 14. "how shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?" And ver. 17. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So that to deny and renounce our senses in matters of faith, is to take away the main pillar and foundation of it.

2. Others, almost with equal absurdity, would comprehend under our SAVIOUR's precept of self-denial, the denying and renouncing of our reason in matters of faith. And this is self-denial with a witness, for a man to deny his own reason; for it is to deny himself to be a man. This surely is a very great mistake, and though the ground of it may be innocent; yet the consequence of it, and the discourses upon it, are very absurd.

The ground of the mistake is this. Men think they deny their own reason, when they assent to the revelation of God in such things, as their own reason could neither have discovered, nor is able to give

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the reason of: whereas in this case, a man is so far from denying his own reason, that he does that which is most agreeable to it. For what more reasonable than to believe whatever we are sufficiently assur'd is reveal'd to us by God, who can neither be deceiv'd himself, nor deceive us?

But though the ground of this mistake may be innocent, yet the consequences of it are most absurd and dangerous. For if we are to renounce our reason in matters of faith, then are we bound to believe without reason, which no man can do; or if he could, then faith would be unreasonable, and infidelity reasonable. So that this instance likewise of self-denial, to renounce and deny our own reason, as it is no where exprest, so it cannot reasonably be thought to be intended by our SAVIOUR in this precept.

3. Nor doth this precept of self-denial require men to be content to renounce their own eternal happiness, and to be willing to be damned for the glory of God, and the good of their brethren. If this were the meaning of this precept, we might justly say, as the disciples did to our SAVIOUR, in another case, "this is a hard saying, and who can bear it?" The very thought of this is enough to make human nature to tremble at it's very foundation. For the deepest principle that God hath planted in our nature is "the desire of our own preservation and happiness," and into this the force of all laws, and the reason of all our duty is at last resolved.

From whence it plainly follows, that it can be no man's duty in any case to renounce his own happiness, and to be content to be for ever miserable; because if once this be made a duty, there will be no argument left, to persuade any man to it. For the most powerful arguments, that God ever used, to persuade

persuade men to any thing, are the promise of eternal happiness, and the terror of everlasting torments : but if this were a man's duty, to be content to be miserable for ever, neither of these arguments would be of force sufficient to persuade a man to it.

The first of these, namely, the promise of eternal happiness, could signify nothing to him that is to be eternally miserable ; because if he be to be so, it is impossible that he should ever have the benefit of that promise : and the threatening of eternal misery, could be no argument in this case ; because the duty is just as difficult, as the argument is powerful, and no man can be moved to submit to any thing that is grievous and terrible, but by something that is more terrible ; for if it be not, it is the same thing, whether he submit to it or not ; and then no man can be content, to be eternally miserable, only for the fear of being so ; for this would be for a man to run himself upon that very inconvenience which he is so much afraid of ; and 'tis madness for a man to die for fear of death. *Quis novus hic furor est, ne moriari, mori ?*

By this it plainly appears, how unreasonable it is to imagine, that by this precept of self-denial, our SAVIOUR should require men to renounce everlasting happiness, and to be content to be miserable for ever, upon any account whatsoever ; because this were to suppose, that GOD hath imposed that upon us as a duty, to oblige us whereto there can be no argument offer'd that can be powerful enough.

As for the glory of GOD, which is pretended to be the reason, it is an impossible supposition ; because it cannot be for the glory of GOD, to make a creature for ever miserable, that shall not by his wilful obstinacy and impenitence deserve to be so. But this is only cast in to add weight.

The other reason of the good and salvation of our brethren, is the only consideration for which there is any manner of colour from scripture ; and two instances are alledged to this purpose, of two very excellent persons, that seem to have desired this, and to have submitted to it ; and therefore it is not so unreasonable as we would make it, that our SAVIOUR should enjoin it as a duty. The instances alledged are these. Moses desired of GOD that he might be blotted out of the book of life, rather than the people of Israel, whom he had conducted and governed so long, should be destroyed : and in the new testament St. Paul tells us, that “ he could wish that himself “ were accursed from CHRIST, for his brethren ; ” so earnest a desire had he of their salvation.

But neither of these instances are of force sufficient to overthrow the reasons of my former discourse ; for the desire of Moses amounts only to a submission to a temporal death, that his nation might be saved from a temporal ruin. For the expression of “ blotting out of the book of life,” is of the same importance with those phrases so frequently used in the old testament, of “ blotting out from the face of “ the earth,” and “ blotting out one’s name from “ under heaven,” which signify no more than temporal death and destruction ; and then Moses’s wish was reasonable and generous, and signifies no more, but that he was willing, if GOD pleased, to die to save the nation.

As for St. Paul’s wish, of “ being accursed from “ CHRIST,” it is plainly an hyperbolical expression of his great affection to his country-men the Jews, and his zeal for their salvation, which was so great, that if it had been a thing reasonable and lawful, he could have wish’d the greatest evil to himself for their

fakes; and therefore it is observable, that it is not a positive and absolute wish, but express'd in the usual form of ushering in an hyperbole; I could wish, just as we are wont to say, when we would express a thing to the height, which is not fit, nor intended to be done by us, I could wish so or so; I could even afford to do this or that; which kind of speeches no man takes for a strict and precise declaration of our minds, but for a figurative expression of a great passion.

And thus I have done with the first thing I propos'd for the explication of this precept, or duty of self-denial, which was to remove some sorts of self-denial, which by some are frequently instanced in, as intended by our SAVIOUR in this precept, I proceed now to the

Second thing I propos'd, which is to declare positively, what that self-denial is, which our SAVIOUR here intends; and 'tis plainly this, and nothing but this; that we should be willing to part with all earthly comforts and conveniencies, to quit all our temporal interests and enjoyments, and even life itself, for the sake of CHRIST and his religion; this our SAVIOUR means, by "denying our selves:" and then (which is much the same with the other) that we should be willing to bear any temporal inconvenience and suffering upon the same account; this is "to take up our crosses and follow him."

And that this is the full meaning of these two phrases, of "denying our selves," and "taking up our crosses," will clearly appear, by considering the particular instances, which our SAVIOUR gives of this self-denial, whenever he hath occasion to speak of it, by which you will plainly see, that these expressions amount to no more than I have said. Even here in the text, after our SAVIOUR had told his disciples, that "he that would come after him,

" must

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“ must deny himself, and take up his cross ;” it follows immediately, “ for whosoever will save his life, “ shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for “ my sake, shall find it.” You see here, that he instanceth in parting with our lives for him, as the highest piece of self-denial, which he requires. And he himself elsewhere tells us, “ that greater love “ than this hath no man, that a man lay down his “ life for his friend.” Elsewhere he instanceth in quitting our nearest relations for his sake, Luke xiv. 26, 27. “ If any man come to me, and hate not his “ father, and mother, and wife, and children, and “ brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he “ cannot be my disciple ; and whosoever doth not “ bear his cross and come after me, he cannot be “ my disciple.”

Which expressions, of “ hating father and mother, and other relations, and even life itself,” are not to be understood rigorously, and in an absolute sense, but comparatively ; for it is an Hebrew manner of speech, to express that absolutely, which is meant only comparatively ; and so our SAVIOUR explains himself in a parallel text to this, Matt. x. 37, 38. “ He that loveth father and mother more than “ me, is not worthy of me ; he that loveth son or “ daughter more than me, is not worthy of me ; “ and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth “ after me, is not worthy of me.” In another place, our SAVIOUR instanceth in quitting our estates for his sake, Matt. xix. 29. “ Every one that shall for- “ sake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or “ mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my “ names sake ;” by all which it appears that this self-denial which our SAVIOUR here requires of his disciples, is to be extended no farther, than to a readiness

ness and willingness, whenever God shall call us to it, to quit all our temporal interests and enjoyments, and even life itself, the dearest of all other, and to submit to any temporal inconvenience and suffering for his sake. And thus much for the explication of the precept here in the text. I proceed in the

III. Place, to consider the strict and indispensable obligation of this precept of self-denial, and suffering for CHRIST and his truth, rather than to forsake and renounce them, "if any man will come after me," or "be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me;" that is, upon these terms he must be my disciple, in this manner he must follow me; and in the text I mention'd before, he declares again, that he that is not ready to quit all his relations and even life itself, for his sake, "is not worthy of him, and cannot be his disciple;" and "whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after him, cannot be his disciple;" so that we cannot be the disciples of CHRIST, nor be worthy to be called by his name, if we be not ready thus to deny ourselves for his sake: and not only so; but if for fear of the cross, or of any temporal sufferings, we should renounce and deny him; he threatens "to deny us before his Father which is in heaven," (i. e.) to deprive us of eternal life, and to sentence us to everlasting misery, Matt. x. 32. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven;" and Mark viii. 38. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels;"

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“ angels ;” that is, when he cometh to judge the world, they shall not be able to stand in that judgment ; for that by his “ being ashamed of them,” is meant, that they shall be condemned by him, is plain from what goes before, ver. 26, 27. “ What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?” and then it follows, “ whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words.”

But because some have the confidence to tell the world, that our SAVIOUR doth not require thus much of Christians ; but all that he obligeth us to, is to believe in him in our hearts, but not to make any outward profession of his religion, when the magistrate forbids it, and we are in danger of suffering for it ; I shall therefore briefly examine what is pretended for so strange an assertion, and so directly contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel, and to the express words of our SAVIOUR.

The author of the book called the Leviathan tells us, that we are not only not bound to confess CHRIST, but we are obliged to deny him, in case the magistrate requireth us so to do. His words are these ; “ What if the sovereign forbid us to believe in CHRIST ?” He answers, “ such forbidding is of no effect, because belief and unbelief never follow mens commands. But what, (says he) if we be commanded by our lawful prince to say with our tongues, we believe not ; must we obey such commands ?” To this he answers, “ that profession with the tongue is but an external thing, and no more than any other gesture, whereby we signify our obedience, and wherein a Christian, holding firmly in his heart the faith of CHRIST, hath the

same

“same liberty which the prophet Elisha allowed to Naaman. But what then (says he) shall I answer to our SAVIOUR,” saying, “whosoever denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven?” His answer is, “That we may say, that whatsoever a subject is compell’d to in obedience to his sovereign, and does it not in order to his own mind, but the law of his country, the action is not his, but his sovereign’s; nor is it he that in this case denies CHRIST before men, but his governor, and the laws of his country.”

But can any man, that in good earnest pays any degree of reverence to our blessed SAVIOUR and his religion, think to baffle such plain words by so frivolous an answer? There is no man doubts, but if the magistrate should command men to deny CHRIST, he would be guilty of a great sin in so doing: but if “we must obey GOD rather than men,” and every man must “give an account of himself to GOD;” how will this excuse him that denies CHRIST, or breaks any other commandment of GOD, upon the command of the magistrate? And to put the matter out of all doubt, that our SAVIOUR forbids all that will be his disciples, upon pain of damnation, to deny him, though the magistrate should command them to do so; it is very observable, that in that very place, where he speaks of confessing or denying him before men, he puts this very case of their being brought before kings and governors for confessing him, Matt. x. 17. “Beware (says he) of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them

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“and the Gentiles.” But what testimony would this be against them, if Christians were bound to deny CHRIST at their command? But our SAVIOUR goes on, and tells them how they ought to demean themselves, when they were brought before kings and governors, ver. 19. “But when they shall deliver you up, take ye no thought how, or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that very hour what ye shall speak.” But what need of any such extraordinary assistance in the case, if they had nothing to do, but to deny him, when they were required by the magistrate to do it? And then (proceeding in the same discourse) he bids them, ver. 28. “Not to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do:” that is, not to deny him, for fear of any temporal punishment or suffering the magistrate could inflict upon them; “but to fear” and obey “him, who can destroy body and soul in hell.” And upon this discourse our SAVIOUR concludes, ver. 32, 33. “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.” And now can any thing be plainer, than that our SAVIOUR requires his disciples to make confession of him before kings and governors, and not to deny him for fear of any thing which they can do to them? But let us enquire a little farther, and see how the apostles, who received this precept from our SAVIOUR himself, did understand it. Acts iv. 14. we find Peter and John summoned before the Jewish magistrates, who “strictly commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of JESUS. But Peter and John answered and said unto

“them,

“ them, whether it be right in the sight of God, to SERM.
“ hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye.” LXVI.

And when they still persisted in their course, notwithstanding the command of the magistrate, and were called again before the council, chap. v. 28. and “ the high priest asked them, saying, did we not “ straitly command you, that you should not teach “ in this name? and behold ye have filled Jerusalem “ with your doctrine;” they return them again the same answer, ver. 29. “ Then Peter and the other “ apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God “ rather than men.”

And let any man now judge, whether our SAVI-
OUR did not oblige men to confess him even before magistrates, and to obey him rather than men. And indeed, how can any man in reason think, that the great king and governor of the world should invest any man with a power to control his authority, and to oblige men to disobey and renounce him, “ by “ whom kings reign, and princes decree judgment? This is a thing so unreasonable, that it can hardly be imagined, that any thing but downright malice against God and religion could prompt any man to advance such an assertion.

I should now have proceeded to the fourth and last particular, which I proposed to speak to; namely, to vindicate the reasonableness of this precept of self-denial and suffering for CHRIST, which at first appearance may seem to be so very harsh and difficult. But this, together with the application of this discourse, shall be reserved to another opportunity.

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Of self-denial and suffering for CHRIST'S
fake.

MATTH. XVI. 24.

Then said JESUS unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

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The
second
sermon on
this text.

“**T**HEN said JESUS to his disciples,” that is, upon occasion of his former discourse with them, concerning his approaching passion, and that he must shortly go up to Jerusalem, and there suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and at last be put to death by them; “then said JESUS unto his disciples, if any man will come after me;” that is, if any man will be my disciple, and undertake the profession of my religion; he must do it upon these terms of self-denial and suffering.

In the handling of these words, I proceeded in this method.

First, I considered the way which our SAVIOUR here useth in making proselytes, and gaining men over to his religion. He offers no manner of force and violence to compel men to the profession of it; but fairly proposeth it to their consideration and choice, telling them plainly upon what terms they must be his disciples; if they like them, and be resolved to submit to them, well; if not, 'tis in vain to follow him any longer; for they “cannot be his disciples.” And to use any other way than this

to gain men over to religion, is contrary both to the nature of man, who is a reasonable creature ; and to the nature of religion, which, if it be not our free choice, cannot be religion.

Secondly, I explained this duty or precept of self-denial, expressed in these words, " let him deny himself, and take up his cross ;" which phrase of " taking up one's cross," is an allusion to the Roman custom, which was, that the malefactor that was to be crucified, was to take up his cross upon his shoulders, and to carry it to the place of execution.

Now for our clearer understanding of this precept of self-denial, I told you, that it is not to be extended to every thing that may properly be called by that name, but to be limited by the plain scope and intendment of our SAVIOUR's discourse ; and therefore I did in the

First place remove several things which are instanced in by some, as intended and required by this precept. As,

1. That we should deny and renounce our own sense in matters of faith. But this I shewed to be absurd and impossible ; because if we do not believe what we see, or will believe contrary to what we see, we destroy all certainty, there being no greater than that of sense. Besides, that the evidence of faith being less clear and certain than that of sense, it is contrary to the nature of assent, which is always swayed and born down by the greatest and clearest evidence. So that we cannot assent to any thing in plain contradiction to the evidence of sense.

2. Others would comprehend under this precept, the denying of our reason in matters of faith ; which is in the next degree of absurdity to the other ; because no man can believe any thing, but upon some reason or other ;

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other ; and to believe without any reason, or against reason, is to make faith unreasonable, and infidelity reasonable.

3. Others pretend, that by virtue of this precept, men ought to be content to renounce their own eternal happiness, to be miserable for ever, for the glory of GOD, and the salvation of their brethren. But this I shewed cannot be a duty, for this plain reason ; because if it were, there is no argument left powerful enough to persuade a man to it. And as for the two scripture instances alledged to this purpose ; Moses his wish, of being “ blotted out of the “ book of life” for the people of Israel, signifies no more than a temporal death ; and St. Paul’s, of being “ accursed from CHRIST for his brethren,” is only an hyperbolical expression of his great passion and zeal for the salvation of his countrymen ; as is evident from the form of the expression, such as is commonly used to usher in an hyperbole ; “ I could wish.” And in the

Second place, I shewed positively, that the plain meaning of this precept of self-denial is this, and nothing but this ; that we should be willing to part with all our temporal interests and enjoyments, and even life itself for the sake of CHRIST and his religion. This is, “ to deny ourselves.” And then, that we should be willing to bear any temporal inconvenience and suffering upon the same account. This is “ to “ take up our cross.” And this I shewed from the instances which our SAVIOUR gives of self-denial, whenever he had occasion to discourse of it.

Thirdly, I considered the strict and indispensable obligation of this precept of self-denial, rather than to forsake CHRIST and his religion. Without this disposition and resolution of mind we “ cannot be
“ his

“ his disciples ; and if we deny him before men ; he
“ will also deny us before his Father which is in hea-
“ ven.” And this confession of him and his truth
we are to make before kings and governors, and not-
withstanding their commands to the contrary, which
are of no force against the laws and commands of
God.

Thus far I have gone. There remains only the

Fourth and last particular, which I proposed to
speak to ; viz. to vindicate the reasonableness of this
self-denial and suffering for CHRIST, which at first
appearance may seem to be so very difficult. And
this precept cannot be thought unreasonable, if we
take into consideration these three things.

I. That he, who requires this of us, hath himself
given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever
was. The greatest in itself, in that he denied him-
self more, and suffered more grievous things, than
it is possible for any of us to do : and such an exam-
ple as, in the circumstances of it, is most apt and
powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of
it, because all his self-denial and sufferings were for
our sakes.

If we consider, that he hath promised all needful
supplies of his grace, to enable us to the discharge
of this difficult duty of self-denial and suffering, and
to support and comfort us therein.

III. He hath assured us of a glorious reward of all
our sufferings and self-denial, beyond the proportion
of them, both in the degree and duration of it. I
shall go over these as briefly as I can.

I. If we consider, that he, who requires us thus
to deny ourselves for him, hath given us the greatest
example of self-denial that ever was. Our SAVIOUR
knowing how unwelcome this doctrine of self-denial
and

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and suffering must needs be to his disciples, and how hardly this precept would go down with them, to sweeten it a little, and take off the harshness of it, and to prepare their minds the better for it, he tells them first of his own sufferings, that by that means he might, in some measure, reconcile their minds to it, when they saw that he required nothing of them but what he was ready to undergo himself, and to give them the example of it. And upon this occasion it was, that our SAVIOUR acquaints them with the hard and difficult terms upon which they must be his disciples: ver. 21. the evangelist tells us, that “JESUS began to shew unto his disciples, how that “he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things “of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and “be killed. Then said JESUS unto his disciples,” that is, immediately upon this discourse of his own sufferings, as the fittest time for it, he takes the opportunity to tell them plainly of their own sufferings, and that unless they were prepared and resolved to deny themselves so far, as to suffer all manner of persecution for his sake and the profession of his religion, they could not be his disciples. “If any man will “come after me, let him deny himself, and take up “his cross, and follow me,” that is, let him reckon and resolve upon following that example of self-denial and suffering in which I will go before him. Now the consideration of this example of self-denial and suffering, which our SAVIOUR hath given us, hath great force in it to reconcile us to this difficult duty, and to shew the reasonableness of it.

1. In that he, who requires us thus to deny ourselves, hath himself in his own person, given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever was. And,

2. Such an example as, in all the circumstances of it,

it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; because all his self-denial and sufferings were for our sakes.

1. He, who requires us thus to deny ourselves, hath himself in his own person given us the greatest example of self-denial that ever was; in that he denied himself more, and suffered more grievous things, than any of us can do. He bore the insupportable load of all the sins of all mankind, and of the wrath and vengeance due to them. "Never was sorrow like to his sorrow, wherewith the LORD afflicted him in the day of his fierce anger. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; his visage was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men." (i. e.) He underwent more affliction, and had more contempt poured upon him, than ever was upon any of the sons of men: and yet he endured all this with incredible patience and meekness, with the greatest evenness and constancy of mind, and with the most perfect submission and resignation of himself to the will of God, that can be imagined.

Such an example as this should be of great force to animate us with the like courage and resolution, in lesser dangers and difficulties. To see "the captain of our salvation" going before us, and leading us on so bravely, and "made perfect by" greater "sufferings" than we can ever be called to, or are any ways able to undergo, is no small argument and encouragement to us, to "take up our cross and follow him." The consideration of the unknown sufferings of the Son of God, so great as we cannot well conceive of them, should make all the afflictions and sufferings that can befall us, not only tolerable, but easy to us. Upon this consideration it is, that

the apostle animates Christians to patience in their christian course, notwithstanding all the hardships and sufferings that attended it, Heb. xii. 2. "Let us run
" with patience the race which is set before us, look-
" ing unto JESUS the author and finisher of our
" faith, who endured the cross, and despised the
" shame. For consider him, who endured such con-
" tradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye also
" be weary and faint in your minds."

And this example is more powerful for our encouragement, because therein we see the world conquered to our hands, and all the terrors and temptations of it baffled and subdued, and thereby a cheap and easy victory over it obtained for us. By this consideration, our SAVIOUR endeavours to inspire his disciples with chearfulness and courage in this great conflict, John xvi. 33. "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

2. This example of our SAVIOUR is such as, in all the circumstances of it, is most apt and powerful to engage and oblige us to the imitation of it; because all his self-denial and sufferings were for our sakes in pity and kindness to us, and wholly for our benefit and advantage. We are apt to have their example in great regard, from whom we have received great kindness and mighty benefits. This pattern of self-denial and suffering, which our religion proposeth to us, is the example of one, whom we have reason to esteem, and love, and imitate, above any person in the world. It is the example of our LORD and master, of our sovereign and our SAVIOUR, of the founder of our religion, and of "the author and finisher of our faith:" and surely such an example must needs carry authority with it, and command our imitation.

imitation: It is the example of our best friend, and greatest benefactor; of him, who laid down his life for us, and sealed his love to us with his dearest blood, and even when we were bitter enemies to him, did, and suffered more for us, than any man ever did for his best friend. If we should be reduced to poverty and want, let us consider him, "who being LORD of all, had not where to lay his head; who "being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we "through his poverty might be made rich." If it should be our lot to "be persecuted for righteousness "sake," and exercised with sufferings and reproaches; let us "look unto JESUS the author and finisher of "our faith, who endured the cross and despised the "shame" for our sakes. In a word, can we be discontented at any condition, or decline it in a good cause; when we consider how contented the Son of God was, in the meanest and most destitute; how meek and patient in the most afflicted and suffering condition; how he welcomed all events, and was so perfectly resigned to the will of his heavenly Father, that whatever pleased God, pleased him?

And surely in no case is example more necessary than in this, to engage and encourage us in the discharge of so difficult a duty, so contrary to the bent and inclination of flesh and blood. A bare precept of self-denial, and a peremptory command to sacrifice our own wills, our ease, our pleasure, our reputation, yea, and life itself, to the glory of God, and the maintenance of his truth, would have sounded very harsh and severe, had not the practice of all this been mollified and sweetened by a pattern of so much advantage; by one who in all these respects denied himself, much more than it is possible for us to do; by one who might have insisted upon a greater right, who

abased himself, and stooped from a greater height and dignity; who was not forced into a condition of meanness and poverty, but chose it for our sakes; who submitted to suffering, though he had never deserved it. Here is an example that hath all the argument, and all the encouragement that can be, to the imitation of it.

Such an example is of greater force and authority than any precept or law can be; so that well might our LORD, thus going before us, command us to follow him, and say, "if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." For if he thus denied himself, well may we, who have much less to deny, but much more cause and reason to do it. He did it voluntarily, and of choice; but it is our duty. He did it for our sakes, we do it for our own. His own goodness moved him to deny himself for us; but gratitude obligeth us to deny ourselves in any thing for him. We did not in the least deserve any thing from him; but he hath wholly merited all this, and infinitely more from us. So that such an example as this is, in all the circumstances of it, cannot but be very powerful and effectual to oblige us to the imitation of it. But the reasonableness of this precept will yet farther appear, if we consider in the

Third place, that GOD hath promised to all sincere Christians all needful supplies of his grace, to enable them to the discharge of this difficult duty of self-denial, and to support and comfort them therein. For the spirit of CHRIST dwells in Christians, and the same glorious power that raised up JESUS from the dead, works mightily in them that believe; Eph. i. 19. "That ye may know," (saith St. Paul, speaking in general to all Christians) "what is the exceed-

"ing

“ing greatness of his power to us-ward, who be-
“lieve, according to the working of his mighty
“power which he wrought in CHRIST, when he
“raised him from the dead.” Of ourselves we
are very weak, and the temptations and terrors of
the world very powerful ; but there is a principle re-
siding in every true Christian, able to bear us up a-
gainst the world, and the power of all it's tempta-
tions. “ Whatsoever is born of God ” (saith St.
John) “ overcometh the world ; and this is the vic-
“tory that overcometh the world, even our faith.
“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome ;
“because greater is he that is in you, than he that is
“in the world.”

And this grace and strength was afforded to the
first Christians in a most extraordinary manner, for
their comfort and support under sufferings ; so that
they were “ strengthened with all might, according
“to God's glorious power, unto all long-suffering
“with joyfulness,” as St. Paul prays for the Colossi-
ans, ch. i. 11. And these “ consolations of the spi-
“rit of God,” this “ joy in the Holy Ghost,” was
not peculiarly appropriated to the first times of chri-
stianity ; but is still afforded to all sincere Christians,
in such degree as is necessary, and convenient for
them. And whenever God exerciseth good men
with trials more than human, and such sufferings as
are beyond the ordinary rate of human strength and
patience to bear, he hath promised to endue them
with more than human courage and resolution. So
St. Paul tells the Corinthians, 1 Cor. x. 13. “ He
“is faithful that hath promised, who will not suffer
“you to be tempted above what ye are able, but
“will with the temptation also make a way to escape,
“that ye may be able to bear it.” And why should
we

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we be daunted at any suffering; if God be pleased to encrease our strength, in proportion to the sharpness of our sufferings?

And blessed be God many of our persecuted brethren at this day have remarkably found this comfortable assistance and support; though many likewise have fallen through fear and weakness; as it also happened in the primitive times. But where-ever this promise is not made good, it is, (as I have formerly said) by reason of some fault and failing on our part. Either men were not sincere in the profession of the truth, and then no wonder, if “when tribulation and persecution ariseth, because of the word, they are offended and fall off.” Or else they were too confident of themselves, and did not seek God’s grace and assistance, and rely upon it as they ought; and thereupon God hath left them to themselves (as he did Peter) to convince them of their own frailty and rash confidence; and yet even in that case, when there is truth and sincerity at the bottom, there is no reason to doubt, but that the goodness of God is such, as by some means or other to give to such persons (as he did to Peter) the opportunity of recovering themselves by repentance, and a more stedfast resolution afterwards.

Fourthly, if we consider in the last place, that our SAVIOUR hath assured us of a glorious and eternal reward of all our self-denial and sufferings for him; a reward infinitely beyond the proportion of our sufferings, both in the degree and duration of it. Now the clear discovery of this is peculiarly owing to the christian religion, and “the appearance of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.

And

And as our blessed SAVIOUR hath assured us of this blessed state of good men in another world; so hath he likewise assur'd us, that greater degrees of this happiness shall be the portion of those who suffer for him and his truth, Matt. v. 10, 11, 12. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." And nothing surely can be more reasonable, than to part with things of small value, for things infinitely greater and more considerable; to forego the transient pleasures and enjoyments, and the imperfect felicities of this world, for the solid, and perfect, and perpetual happiness of a better life; and to exchange a short and miserable life, for eternal life and blessedness; in a word, to be content to be driven home, to be banish'd out of this world into our own native country, and to be violently thrust out of this "vale of tears," into those regions of bliss, where are "joys unspeakable and full of glory."

This consideration St. Paul tells us supported the primitive Christians, under their sharpest and heaviest sufferings, 2 Cor. iv. 16. "For this cause" (says he) "we faint not, because our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; whilst we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." So that our sufferings bear no more proportion to the reward of them, than finite does to infinite, than temporal to eternal, between which there is no proportion.

All

All that now remains, is to draw some useful inferences from what hath been discoursed, concerning this great and difficult duty of self-denial for the sake of CHRIST and his religion; and they shall be these following.

I. To acknowledge the great goodness of GOD to us, that all these laws and commands, even the hardest and severest of them, are so reasonable.

GOD, as he is our maker, and gave us our beings, hath an entire and sovereign right over us, and by virtue of that right, might have imposed very hard things upon us, and this without the giving account to us of any of his matters, and without propounding any reward to us, so vastly disproportionable to our obedience to him. But in giving laws to us, he hath not made use of this right. The most severe and rigorous commands of the gospel are such, that we shall be infinitely gainers by our obedience to them. If we deny our selves any thing in this world for CHRIST and his religion, we shall, in the next, be considered for it to the utmost, not only far beyond what it can deserve, but beyond what we can conceive or imagine; for this perishing life, and the transitory trifles and enjoyments of it, we shall receive "a kingdom which cannot be shaken, an uncorruptible crown which fadeth not away, eternal in the heavens." For these are faithful sayings, and we shall infallibly find them true, "if that we suffer with CHRIST, we shall also reign with him; if we be persecuted for righteousness sake, great shall be our reward in heaven;" if we part with our temporal life, we shall be made partakers of eternal life. He that is firmly persuaded of the happiness of the next world, and believes "the glory which shall then be revealed," hath no reason to be so much

much offended at the sufferings of this present time, so long as he knows and believes, that "these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

II. Seeing this is required of every Christian, to be always in a preparation and disposition of mind to deny our selves, and to take up our cross; if we do in good earnest resolve to be Christians, we ought to sit down and consider well with our selves, what our religion will cost us, and whether we be content to come up to the price of it. If we value any thing in this world above CHRIST and his truth, "we are not worthy of him." If it come to this, that we must either renounce him and his religion, or quit our temporal interests; if we be not ready to forego these, nay, and to part even with life it self, rather than to forsake him and his truth; "we are not worthy of him." These are the terms of our christianity, and therefore we are required in baptism solemnly to renounce the world: and our SAVIOUR, from this very consideration, infers, that all who take upon them the profession of his religion, should consider seriously beforehand, and count the cost of it, Luke xiv. 28. "Which of you (says he) intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Or what king going to war with another king, doth not sit down and consult, whether with ten thousand he be able to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? So likewise, whosoever he be that forsaketh not all he hath, cannot be my disciple." You see the terms upon which we are Christians; we must always be prepared in the resolution of our minds to deny ourselves,

and take up our cross, though we are not actually put upon this trial.

III. What hath been said is matter of great comfort and encouragement to all those who deny themselves, and suffer upon so good an account: of whom, GOD knows, there are too great a number at this day, in several parts of the world; some under actual sufferings, such as cannot but move compassion and horror in all that hear of them; others who are fled hither, and into other countries, for refuge and shelter from one of the sharpest persecutions that perhaps ever was, if all the circumstances of it be duly considered. But not to enlarge upon so unpleasant a theme, they who suffer for the truth and righteousness sake, have all the comfort and encouragement, that the best example, and the greatest and most glorious promises of GOD can give. They have the best example in their view, "JESUS, the " author and finisher of their faith, who endured the " cross, and despised the shame." So that how great and terrible soever their sufferings be, they do but tread in the steps of the Son of GOD, and of the best and holiest man that ever was; and he, who is their great example in suffering, will likewise be their support, and " their exceeding great reward."

So that though suffering for CHRIST be accounted great self-denial, and he is graciously pleased so to accept it, because in denying things present and sensible, for things future and invisible, we do not only declare our affection to him, but our great faith and confidence in him, by shewing that we rely upon his word, and venture all upon the security which he offers us in another world; yet according to a right estimate of things, and to those who " walk by faith " and not by sight," this which we call self-denial,

is,

is, in truth and reality, but a more commendable sort of self-love, because we do herein most effectually consult, and secure, and advance our own happiness.

IV. And lastly, since GOD hath been pleased for so long a time to excuse us from this hardest part of self-denial, let us not grudge to deny ourselves in lesser matters, for the sake of his truth and religion; to miss a good place, or to quit it upon that account; much less let us think much to renounce our vices, and to thwart our evil inclinations for his sake. As Naaman's servant said to him, concerning the means prescribed by the prophet for his cure, "if he had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much more, when he hath only said, wash and be clean?" So since GOD imposeth no harder terms upon us, than repentance and reformation of our lives, we should readily and thankfully submit to them.

This, I know, is difficult to some, to "mortify their earthly members," to "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts of it;" 'tis like "cutting off a right hand, and plucking out a right eye." Some are so strongly addicted to their lusts and vices, that they could with more ease despise life in many cases, than thus deny themselves. But in truth, there is no more of self-denial in it, than a man denies himself when he is mortally sick and wounded, in being content to be cured, and willing to be well. This is not at all to our temporal prejudice and inconvenience, and it directly conduceth to our eternal happiness; for there is no man that lives a holy and virtuous life, and in obedience to the laws of GOD, that can lightly receive any prejudice by it in this world. Since GOD doth not call us to suffer, we should do so much the more for him.

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him. Since he doth not put us to testify our love to him, by laying down our lives for him, we should shew it by a greater care to keep his commandments.

God was pleased to exercise the first Christians with great sufferings, and to try their love and constancy to him and his truth, in a very extraordinary manner, by severity and contempt, by “the spoiling of their goods,” and “the loss of all things; by bonds and imprisonments; by cruel mockings and scourgings;” by the extremity of torments, and by “resisting even unto blood; by being killed for his sake all the day long, and appointed as sheep for the slaughter.” God was pleased to make their way to heaven very sharp and painful, and to “hedge it in,” as it were “with thorns on every side,” so that they could not, but “through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Thus we ought all to be in a readiness and resolution to submit to this duty, if God should think fit at any time of our lives to call us to it. But if he be pleased to excuse us from it, and “to let this cup pass from us,” (which may lawfully be our earnest prayer to God, since we have so good a pattern for it) there will be another duty incumbent upon us, which will take up the whole man, and the whole time of our life, and that is “to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.”

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Preach'd at WHITEHALL before the family,
Nov. 1. 1686.

Good men strangers and sojourners
upon earth.

H E B. XI. 13.

*And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on
the earth.*

The whole verse runs thus ;

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises,
but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded
of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they
were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

THE apostle having declared at the latter end
of the foregoing chapter, that faith is the
great principle whereby good men are acted, and
whereby they are supported under all the evils and
sufferings of this life, verse 38. "Now the just shall
live by faith;" in this chapter he makes it his main
business, to set forth to us at large the force and
power of faith ; and to this purpose, he first tells us
what kind of faith he means ; viz. a firm persuasion
of things not present and visible to sense, but invisible
and future ; ver. 1. "Now faith (saith he) is the
" con-

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The first
sermon on
this text.

“ confident expectation of things hoped for, and the
 “ evidence of things not seen.” Faith represents to
 us the reality of things which are invisible to sense,
 as the existence of God and his providence ; and of
 things which are at a great distance from us, as the
 future state of rewards and punishments in another
 world.

And then he proceeds to shew, by particular and
 famous instances, that the firm belief and persuasion
 of these things, was the great principle of the piety
 and virtue of the saints and of good men in all ages of
 the world ; by this Abel and Enoch and Noah ; A-
 braham, Isaac and Jacob ; Joseph and Moses, and all
 the famous heroes of the old testament “ obtained a
 “ good report,” and “ pleased God,” and did all
 those eminent acts of obedience and self-denial which
 are recorded of them. They “ believed the being
 “ of God, and that he is a rewarder of them that
 “ diligently seek him.” They dreaded his threat-
 enings, and relied upon his promises of future and
 invisible good things. They lived and died in a full
 persuasion and confidence of the truth of them ;
 though they did not live to see them actually fulfilled
 and accomplished. “ All these” (saith he, speaking
 of those eminent saints which he had instanced in
 before) “ died in faith, not having received
 “ the promises, but having seen them afar off, and
 “ were persuaded of them, and embraced them.”
 This is spoken with a more particular regard to A-
 braham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom the promises of
 the conquest and possession of a fruitful land were
 made, and of a numerous offspring, among whom
 should be the Messias, in whom all the nations of
 the earth should be blessed.

These

These promises they did not live to see accomplished and made good in their days ; but they heartily believed them, and rejoiced in the hope and expectation of them, as if they had embraced them in their arms, and been put into the actual possession of them : “ and they confessed, that they were pilgrims “ and strangers in the earth.”

This saying and acknowledgment more particularly and immediately refers to those sayings of the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob, which we find recorded, Gen. xxiii. 4. where Abraham says to the sons of Heth, “ I am a stranger and sojourner with you ;” and Gen. xlvii. 9. where Jacob says to Pharaoh, “ The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an “ hundred and thirty years ; few and evil have the “ days of the years of my life been.” These good men were “ strangers and sojourners” in a land, which was promised to be theirs afterwards. They dwelt in it themselves as strangers, but were in expectation that it would one day become the inheritance of their posterity.

Now in this, as by a type and shadow, the apostle represents to us the condition of good men, while they are passing through this world. They are “ pilgrims and strangers in the earth ;” they travel up and down the world for a time, as the patriarchs did in the land of Canaan ; but are in expectation of a better and more settled condition hereafter ; “ they “ desire a better country,” that is, an heavenly, says the apostle at the 16th verse of this chapter.

That which I design from these words is to represent to us our present condition in this world, and to awaken us to a due sense and serious consideration of it. It is the same condition, that all the saints and holy men that are gone before us were in, in this world,

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world, and every one of us may say with David, Psal. xxxix. 12. "I am a stranger with thee, and a fojourner, as all my fathers were." It is a condition very troublesom and very unsettled, such as that of "pilgrims and strangers" useth to be. This we must all acknowledge, if we judge rightly of our present state and condition. "They confessed, that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth:" but yet it was not without the hope and expectation of a better and happier condition in reversion. So it follows just after; "they that say such things," (that is, "that confess themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth) declare plainly, that they seek a country." This bore up the patriarchs under all the evils and troubles of their pilgrimage, that they expected an inheritance, and a quiet and settled possession of that good land which God had promised to them. Answerably to which, good men do expect, after "the few and evil days of their pilgrimage" in this world are over, a blessed inheritance in "a better country," that is, "an heavenly;" and with blessed Abraham, the father of the faithful, they "look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," as it is said of that good patriarch at the tenth verse of this chapter.

It is very frequent, not only in scripture, but in other authors, to represent our condition in this world, by that of pilgrims and sojourners in a foreign country: for the mind which is the man, and our immortal souls, which are by far the most noble and excellent part of ourselves, are the natives of heaven, and but "pilgrims and strangers" here on the earth; and when the days of our pilgrimage shall be over, are designed to return to that heavenly country from which they came, and to which they belong. And therefore

Therefore the apostle tells us, Phil. iii. 20. that Christians have relation to heaven as their native place and country, *ἡμῶν γὰρ τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν ἔθρανοις ὑπάρχει*, "our conversation is in heaven," so we render the words; but they properly signify, that Christians are members of that city and society which is above; and though they converse at present here below, while they are passing through this world, yet heaven is the country to which they do belong, and whither they are continually tending, *sedes ubi fata quiescunt*, where a quiet habitation, and a perpetual rest is designed and prepared for them. This acknowledgment David makes concerning himself, and all the people of God, 1 Chron. xxix. 15. "For we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers. Our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding." So likewise St. Peter, 1 Pet. i. 17. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear;" and chap. ii. ver. 11. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims abstain from fleshly lusts."

And not only the inspired writers of holy scripture, but heathen authors, do frequently make use of this allusion. Plato tells us, it was a common saying, and almost in every man's mouth, *παρεπιδημία τις ἐστὶν ὁ βίος*, the life of man is a kind of pilgrimage. And Tully, in his excellent discourse *de senectute*, (concerning old age) brings in Cato describing our passage out of this world, not as a departure from our home, but like a man leaving his inn, in which he hath lodged for a night or two, *ex vita ista discedo, non tanquam ex hospitio, non tanquam ex domo; commorandi enim natura diverforium nobis, non habitandi dedit:*

"When I leave this world (says he) I look upon my self as departing out of an inn, and not as quitting

“ mine own home and habitation ; nature having assigned this world to us as a place to sojourn, but not to dwell in.” Which is the same with what the apostle says in the text, concerning the patriarchs, “ they confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth ;” and concerning all Christians, chap. xiii. 14. “ Here we have no continuing city ; but we seek one to come.”

But I do not intend to follow the metaphor too close, and to vex and torture it, by pursuing all those little parallels and similitudes, which a lively fancy might make or find, betwixt the condition of strangers and pilgrims, and the life of man during his abode and passage through this world. I will insist only upon two things, which seem plainly to be designed and intended by this metaphor, and they are these ;

I. That our condition in this world is very troublesome and unsettled ; “ they confessed that they were “ strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

II. It implies a tendency to a future settling, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition, into which we shall enter when we go out of this world. For so it follows in the very next words after the text ; “ they confessed that they were strangers and “ pilgrims on the earth : for they that say such things, “ declare plainly, that they seek a country. They “ that say such things ;” that is, they that acknowledge themselves to have lived in such a restless and uncertain condition in this world, travelling from one place to another, as the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did, and yet pretend to be persuaded of the goodness of God, and the faithfulness of his promise, in which he solemnly declared himself to be their God, do hereby plainly shew, that they expect some

some happier condition hereafter, wherein that great promise of God will be made good to them to the full.

And these are two very weighty and useful considerations, that we should both understand our present condition in this world, and our future hope and expectation after our departure out of it, that so we may demean ourselves suitably to both these conditions; both as it is fit for those who look upon themselves "as pilgrims and sojourners" in this world, and likewise, as it becomes those who "seek and expect a better country," and hope to be made partakers of a blessed immortality in another world. I shall briefly speak to both these; and then shew what effect and influence the serious meditation of these two points ought to have upon every one of us.

I. That our condition in this world is very troublesome and unsettled. This I take to be principally intended in the metaphor of "strangers and pilgrims." Such was the life of the patriarchs, which is here spoken of in the text; they had no constant abode and fixt habitation, but were continually wandering from one kingdom and country to another; in which travels they were exposed to a great many hazards and dangers, afflictions and miseries, affronts and injuries, as we read at large in the history of their travels in the old testament. And such is our condition in this world; it is often troublesome, and always uncertain and unsettled.

It is often very troublesome. Not to insist upon the weak condition of infancy and childhood, the helplessness of that state, and insufficiency of it for it's own preservation, and the supply of it's natural wants and necessities; not to mention the dangerous vanity and desperate folly of youth, nor the infirmities and

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contempts, the many tedious and wearisom days and nights that old age is commonly grieved and afflicted withal, to that degree, as to make life not only unpleasant, but almost an intolerable burden to us. Not to dwell upon these, which yet take up and possess a great share and portion of our lives: if we look upon man in his best state, we shall find him, as David hath long since pronounced on him, to be “altogether vanity.” We need not go a pilgrimage and travel into remote countries, to make life more troublesom and uneasy. In what part of the world soever we are, even that which we improperly call our own home and native country, we shall meet with trouble and inconvenience enough to convince us, that we are but strangers in it. More especially good men are peculiarly liable to a great many evils and sufferings upon account of their piety and virtue. “They are not of the world” (as our blessed SAVIOUR tells his disciples, John xv. 19.) and “because they are not of the world, therefore the world hateth them,” and taketh all opportunities and occasions to vex and persecute them in one kind or other, either by doing all manner of evil to them, or by speaking all manner of evil of them.

But suppose we escape trouble upon this account there are abundance of common and natural inconveniencies, which render human life very uneasy. For either we must live alone, or in the company and society of others: one of these two is necessary and unavoidable. Suppose we would live alone; how few are there that can enjoy themselves tolerably alone for any considerable time? For though there be a great deal too much of self-love in mankind, and men are generally extremely fond of themselves; yet I know not how it happens, (though so it is) that very

few men in the world care for their own company, or can endure, for any considerable time, to converse only with themselves; nay, for the most part, they are sooner glutted with themselves, and surfeited of their own conversation, than with the worst company they can meet with; a shrewd sign, as one would think, that they knew something worse by themselves than of any body else, or at least they know it more certainly. It is a wise and deep saying of Aristotle, "whoever affects to be alone, must be ἢ Θεός, ἢ ἑρμιον, either a God or a wild beast;" either he must be sufficient for himself, and want nothing; or of so wild and savage a disposition, as to destroy every thing that is weaker, and to run away from every thing that is stronger than himself. Now man is neither good enough to be contented and satisfied with himself, nor bad enough to hate and avoid every body else; and therefore he must enter into society, and keep company with other men.

And if we go abroad into the world, and try the conversation of men, it cannot but grieve us to see a great many things, which yet we must see every day; the censoriousness, and uncharitableness, and insincerity of men one towards another; to see with what kindness they will treat one another to the face, and how hardly they will use them behind their backs. If there were nothing else, this one naughty quality, so common and reigning among mankind, were enough to make an honest and true hearted man, one that loves plainness and sincerity, to be heartily sick of the world, and glad to steal off the stage, where there is nothing native and sincere, but all personated and acted; where the conversation of a great part of men is all designing and insidious, full of flattery and falsehood, of good words and ill offices: "one speak-
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“eth peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in his heart he lieth in wait,” as it is in the prophet, Jer. ix. 8. And when a man hath done all the good turns he can, and endeavoured to oblige every man, and not only to live inoffensively, but exemplarily; he is fairly dealt withal, and comes off upon good terms, if he can but escape the ill words of men for doing well, and obtain a pardon for those things which truly deserve praise.

But setting aside these, and the like melancholy considerations; when we are in the health and vigour of our age, when our blood is warm, and our spirits quick, and the humours of our body not yet turned and soured by great disappointments, and grievous losses of our estates, or nearest friends and relations, by a long course of afflictions, by many cross events and calamitous accidents; yet we are continually liable to all these: and the perpetual fear and danger of them is no small trouble and uneasiness to our minds, and does in a great measure rob us of the comfort, and eat out the pleasure and sweetness of all our enjoyments; and, by degrees, the evils we fear overtake us; and as one affliction and trouble goes off, another succeeds in the place of it, like Job's messengers, whose bad tidings and reports of calamitous accidents came so thick upon him, that they overtook one another.

If we have a plentiful fortune, we are apt to abuse it to intemperance and luxury; and this naturally breeds bodily pains and diseases, which take away all the comfort and enjoyment of a great estate. If we have health, it may be we are afflicted with losses, or deprived of friends, or cross'd in our interests and designs, and one thing or other happens to impede or interrupt the contentment and happiness of our lives.

lives. Sometimes an unexpected storm, or some other sudden calamity, sweepeth away, in an instant, all that which with so much industry and care we have been gathering many years. Or if an estate stand firm, our children are taken away, to whose comfort and advantage all the pains and endeavours of our lives were devoted. Or if none of these happen, (as it is very rare to escape most, or some of them) yet for a demonstration to us that God intended this world to be uneasy, to convince us that a perfect state of happiness is not to be had here below, we often see in experience, that those who seem to be in a condition as happy as this world can put them into, by the greatest accommodations towards it, are yet as far or farther from happiness, as those who are destitute of most of those things wherein the greatest felicity of this world is thought to consist. Many times it so happens, that they who have all the furniture and requisites, all the materials and ingredients of a worldly felicity at their command, and in their power, yet have not the skill and ability out of all these to frame a happy condition of life to themselves. They have health, and friends, and reputation, and estate in abundance, and all outward accommodations that heart can wish; and yet in the midst of all these circumstances of outward felicity, they are uneasy in their minds, and as the wise man expresseth it, “in their sufficiency they are in streights,” and are as it were surfeited even with happiness itself, and do so fantastically and unaccountably nauseate the good condition they are in, that though they want nothing to make them happy, yet they cannot think themselves so; though they have nothing in the world to molest and disgust them, yet they can make a shift to create as much trouble to themselves, out of nothing,

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as they who have the real and substantial causes of discontent.

Which plainly shews, that we are not to look for happiness here; 'tis not to be found in this land of the living; and after our enquiries after it, we shall see sufficient reason to take up Solomon's conclusion, that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" which is much the same with that aphorism of David his father, which I mentioned before, that "man in his best estate is altogether vanity."

But what happiness soever our condition in this world is capable of, 'tis most assuredly full of uncertainty and unsettlement; we cannot enjoy it long, and every moment we are in danger of being deprived of it. Whatever degree of earthly felicity we are possess'd of, we have no security that it shall continue. There is nothing in this world, but, when we are as sure of it as this world can make us, may be taken away from us by a thousand accidents. But suppose it to abide and continue; we ourselves shall be taken away from it. We must die, and "in that very day" all our enjoyments and hopes, as to this world, will perish with us; for here is no abiding place, "we have no continuing city;" so that it is in vain to design a happiness to our selves in this world, when we are not to stay in it, but only travel and pass through it.

And this is the first; our condition in this world is very troublesome and unsettled.

. II. Our condition in this world being a state of pilgrimage, doth imply a tendency to future settlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition hereafter. And so the apostle reasons immediately after the text; "they confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth; for they that

" say

“ say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country ;” that is, they who acknowledge themselves to be “ pilgrims and strangers in the earth,” and yet withal profess to be persuaded of the goodness of God and the fidelity of his promise, “ do plainly declare, that they seek” another “ country.” This is spoken of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who acknowledged themselves to be “ strangers and pilgrims in the earth ;” and thereby “ declared, that they sought” another “ country.” Now, says the apostle, this cannot be the country from whence they first came, Ur of the Chaldees, ver. 15. “ And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had an opportunity of returning thither.” And therefore he concludes, that the country which they sought was a better country than any in this world, ver. 16. “ But now they desire a better country ; that is, an heavenly. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God ; for he hath prepared for them a city.” This plainly refers to that famous declaration or promise of God to the patriarchs, of being their God ; “ I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Now certainly this promise of God did signify some very great blessing and advantage to those faithful servants of God above others. This was not made good to them in this world ; for “ they confessed, that they were pilgrims and strangers in the earth.” Where then is the blessing spoken of and signified by the great words of that promise that “ God was their God ?” They met with no such condition in this world, as was answerable to the greatness of the promise. From hence the apostle argues, that they had a firm persuasion of a future happiness ; “ for they that say such

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“ things declare plainly, that they seek a better country ; that is, an heavenly. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, since he hath prepared for them a city.” And though the promise of God to Abraham did immediately design the land of Canaan, and the earthly Jerusalem ; yet the apostle extends it to that which was typified by it ; viz. “ an heavenly country,” the “ Jerusalem which is above,” which, at the 10th verse of this chapter, is called “ a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” And now, seeing God hath designed and prepared so great a happiness for them in another world, well might he be called “ their God,” notwithstanding that they were “ strangers and pilgrims on the earth ;” that is, though the full meaning and importance of this promise was not made good to them in this world, yet it was accomplish’d to the full in the happiness which was designed for them in another life. “ And God need not be ashamed to be called their God ;” implying, that if nothing had been meant by it beyond this world, this promise, of God’s being “ their God,” would have fallen shamefully short of what it seemed to import. And this I conceive to be the true reason, why our SAVIOUR lays so much weight upon this promise, as to pitch upon it for the proof of the resurrection ; that is, of a future state of happiness in another world.

There are many considerations apt to persuade good men of another life after this ; as, that mankind is generally possess’d with this hope and persuasion ; and that the more wise and virtuous men have been, the more plainly have they apprehended the hopes of immortality, and the better have they been contented to leave this world, as if, seeing farther

ther than other men, they had a clearer prospect of the happiness they were entering upon : but above all, that God hath made our condition in this world so troublesome and unsettled, as if he had designed on purpose to make us seek for happiness elsewhere, and to elevate and raise our minds to the hopes and expectation of a condition better and more durable, than any that is to be met with in this world ; which, considering the goodness of God, and his gracious providence and care of good men, is a thing of itself extremely credible.

Having thus, as briefly as I could, dispatched the two particulars which I propounded to speak to for the explication of the text, I should now shew what influence these considerations ought to have upon our lives and practice.

And if this be our condition in this world, and these our hopes and expectations as to another life ; if we be “ pilgrims and strangers on the earth ;” and “ look for a better country, that is, an heavenly ;” this ought to have a great influence upon us in these following respects, which I shall at present but very briefly mention.

1. Let us intangle and incumber ourselves as little as we can in this our pilgrimage ; let us not ingage our affections too far in the pleasures and advantages of this world ; for we are not to continue and settle in it, but to pass through it. A little will serve for our passage and accommodation in this journey ; and beyond that, why should we so earnestly covet and seek more ?

2. If we be “ pilgrims and strangers ;” then it concerns us to behave ourselves blamelessly and inoffensively, remembering, that the eyes of people are upon us, and that those among whom we live will be

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very curious and observant of our manners and carriage.

3. Let us be chearful and patient under the troubles and afflictions of this present life. They who are in a strange country, must expect to encounter many injuries and affronts, and to be put to great difficulties and hazards, which we should endeavour to bear with that chearfulness, as men that are upon a journey use to bear foul ways and bad weather, and inconvenient lodging and accommodations.

4. The consideration of our present condition and future hopes should set us above the fondness of life, and the slavish fear of death. For our minds will never be raised to their true pitch and height, till we have in some good measure conquered these two passions, and made them subject to our reason. As for this present life, and the enjoyments of it, what do we see in them, that should make us so strangely to dote upon them? *Quæ lucis miseri tam dira cupido!* This world, at the best, is but a very indifferent place: and he is the wisest man that bears himself towards it with the most indifferent affection; that is always willing to leave it, and yet patient to stay in it as long as God pleases.

5. We should always prefer our duty and a good conscience before all the world; because it is in truth more valuable, if our souls be immortal, and do survive in another world. For (as our SAVIOUR argues) "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And thus St. Paul reasoned with himself, from the belief of "a resurrection of the just and unjust. For this cause (saith he) I exercise my self alway to have a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward man."

Lastly,

Lastly, If we be sojourners and travellers, we should often think of our end, and carefully mind the way to it. Our end is everlasting happiness; and the way to it is a constant and sincere and universal obedience to the commandments of God. When the young man in the gospel enquired of our SAVIOUR the way to eternal happiness, saying, "good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal Life?" His answer to him was, "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." We may easily mistake our way; for "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it." Therefore we should often pray to God, as David does, Psal. cxix. 19. "I am a stranger in the earth, hide not thy commandments from me." And Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

S E R M O N LXIX.

Good men strangers and sojourners
upon earth.

H E B. XI. 13.

*And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on
the earth.*

The whole verse runs thus ;

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises,
but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded
of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they
were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

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The
second
sermon on
this text.

I Have lately in this place (upon a particular day
and occasion, begun to handle these words ; I
shall briefly give you the heads of what hath been
already delivered, and proceed to what remains.
And that which I designed from this text was, to re-
present our present condition in this world, and to
awaken our minds to a due sense and consideration of
it. It is the same condition that all the saints and holy
men that have gone before us were in, in this world ;
and we may all of us say with David, Psal. xxxix.
12. " I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as
all my fathers were."

It is very frequent, not only in scripture, but in other authors, to represent our condition in this world, by that of "pilgrims and sojourners" in a far country. For the mind, which is the man, and our immortal souls, which are, by far, the most noble and excellent part of our selves, are the natives of heaven, and but "pilgrims and strangers" here on the earth; and when the days of our pilgrimage shall be accomplished, are designed to return to that "heavenly country" from which they came, and to which they belong. And for the explication of this metaphor, I insisted only upon two things, which seem plainly to be designed and intended by it.

I. That our condition in this world is very troublesome and unsettled; "they confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth."

II. It implies a tendency to a future settlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition, into which we shall enter when we go out of this world.

And these I told you are two very weighty and useful considerations; that we should both understand our present condition in this world, and our future hopes and expectation after our departure out of it; that so we may demean ourselves suitably to both these conditions; both as is fit for those who look on themselves as "pilgrims and sojourners" in this world; and likewise, as it becomes those who "seek and expect a better country," and hope to be partakers of a blessed immortality in another world.

I. That our condition in this world is very troublesome and unsettled; and this is principally intended by the metaphor of "pilgrims and strangers." Such was the life of the patriarchs here spoken of in the text; they had no constant abode and fixt habitation,

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tation, but were continually wandering from one kingdom and country to another ; in which travels they were exposed to a great many dangers and sufferings, affronts and injuries ; as we read at large in the history of their travels in the old testament. And such is our condition in this world ; it is often troublesom, and always uncertain, and unsettled ; so that whatever degree of worldly felicity any man is posselt of, he hath no security that it shall continue for one moment.

II. Our condition in this world being a state of pilgrimage, it implies a tendency to a future settlement, and the hopes and expectation of a happier condition, into which we shall enter so soon as we leave this world. For so it follows immediately after the text ; “ they confessed that they were pilgrims “ and strangers on the earth ; for they that say such “ things, declare plainly that they seek a country. “ They that say such things,” that is, they that acknowledge themselves to have lived in such a restless and uncertain condition in this world, travelling from one place to another, as the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did ; and yet pretend to be persuaded of the goodness of God, and the faithfulness of his promise, in which he so solemnly declares himself to be their God ; do hereby plainly shew, that they expect some happier condition hereafter, wherein that great promise of God will be made good to them to the full ; so that he need “ not be ashamed “ to have been called their God.”

Having handled at large these two particulars, I come now to shew what influence the consideration of them ought to have upon our lives and practices. And if this be our condition in this world, and these our hopes and expectations, as to another life, if we

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be "pilgrims and strangers in the earth," and "look for a better country," that is, "an heavenly;" this ought to have a great influence upon us in these following respects, which I did but briefly mention before; but shall now prosecute and press more largely.

I. Let us entangle and incumber ourselves as little as we can in this our pilgrimage: let us not engage our affections too far in the pleasures and advantages of this world, because we are not to stay in it, but to pass through it. Upon this consideration the apostle St. Peter doth so earnestly exhort Christians to preserve themselves from fleshly lusts, 1 Pet. ii. 11. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." The gratifying of our inordinate lusts, and our carnal and sensual inclinations, is directly opposite both to the nature of our immortal spirits, and to their great design and business in this world. Fleshly lusts do not only pollute and defile, but even quench and extinguish our diviner part, and do work the ruin and destruction of it; they sink our affections into the mud and filth of this world, and do entangle and detain them there; in a word, they do wholly indispose and unfit us for that pure and spiritual and divine life, which alone can qualify us for our heavenly country and inheritance. And therefore while our souls are sojourning in this world, we should abstain from them, and preserve ourselves unspotted and untainted by them, as being altogether unuseful, and perfectly contrary to the laws and manners of our heavenly country. If we wallow in brutish and filthy lusts, as we pass through this world; our native country, when our souls think to return to it, will reject us and cast us out: when we come to

heaven's gate, and knock there, expecting to be admitted, and shall cry, "Lord, Lord, open unto us;" he will bid us to "depart from him, because we have "been workers of iniquity." Nothing that is unclean can enter into heaven. He who is to receive us into those blessed mansions, hath declared it to be his immutable resolution and decree, that "without holiness, no man shall see the LORD." And therefore as ever we hope to see GOD, in that happy and blissful state, we must "cleanse ourselves from all "filthiness of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in "the fear of GOD;" that having rendered ourselves as like him as we can in this world, we may be capable of the blessed sight and enjoyment of him in the other.

And as for the advantages in this world, let us not pursue them too eagerly. We may take the conveniencies which fairly offer themselves to us, and be content to want what we cannot honestly have, and without going out of the way of our duty; considering that we are travellers, and that a little will serve for our passage and accommodation in our pilgrimage. And beyond that, why should we so earnestly covet more, and trouble ourselves for that which is not necessary to our journey? Why should we at any time deal unjustly to attain any of this world's goods? They will stand us in stead for so little a while, that we can have no temptation to injure or oppress any man, to break the peace of our consciences, and to wound our souls for the attaining of them. If the providence of GOD offer them to us, and bring them to our hands, in the use of honest diligence and lawful means; as we are not to refuse them, so neither are we to set our hearts upon them, nor to suffer our affections to be entangled in them.

The wisest use we can make of them, will be, to do like those who traffick in foreign parts, to consign our estates into our own native country, to send our treasures before us into the other world, that we may have the benefit of them when we come there. And this we may do by alms and charity. Whatever we spend upon the flesh, we leave behind us, and it will turn to no account to us in our own country: but whatever we lay out for the relief of the poor, is so much treasure laid out and secured to ourselves, against another day. So our blessed SAVIOUR assures us, Luke xii. 33. That "giving of alms is providing for ourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not."

II. If we be pilgrims and strangers, then it concerns us to behave ourselves with great caution, and to live blamelessly and inoffensively; remembering that the eyes of people are upon us, and that those among whom we sojourn, will be very prying and curious and narrow observers of our manners and carriage. They that are in a strange country, are not wont to take that liberty and freedom, which the natives of the place may do, but to keep a perpetual guard upon themselves, knowing how strictly they are observed, and that they live among those who bear no good will to them, and that every bad thing we do, reflects upon our nation, and is a reproach to the country to which we belong. "Ye are not of the world;" (says our Lord) "if ye were of the world, the world would love it's own: but ye are not of the world; therefore the world hateth you." Upon this account the apostle chargeth Christians to be "harmless and blameless," and "as it becomes the sons of God to be, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom we" should "shine as lights."

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The same argument St. Peter useth, 1 Pet. ii. 11, 12.
 “ I beseech you, as pilgrims and strangers, to abstain
 “ from fleshly lusts, having your conversation honest
 “ among the Gentiles ;” that is, considering that you
 are among strangers and enemies, and therefore ought
 to be very careful to bring no scandal upon your holy
 profession, among those who will be ready to take
 all advantages against you. Particularly, we who
 pretend to the same heavenly country, must be kind
 to one another ; and whilst we live among strangers
 have no quarrels amongst ourselves. In a strange
 country, it useth to be a mighty endearment of men
 to one another, that they are of the same country,
 and fellow citizens, and this alone is commonly
 sufficient to unite their affections, and link their
 interest together. But how little of this is to be
 seen among Christians ! How shamefully do they
 quarrel among themselves, in the midst of enemies
 and strangers ? As if they had no relation to one an-
 other, and never expected to meet at last in the same
 country, and there to live together for ever.

III. Let us be as patient and chearful as we can,
 under all the troubles and afflictions which we meet
 with in this life. They who are in strange countries
 must expect to encounter many injuries and affronts,
 and to be put to great difficulties and hardships.
 Those which are lighter and more tolerable, we must
 bear with chearfulness. Upon a journey men use to
 put on all the pleasantness they can, and to make
 sport of all the inconveniencies of the ways and wea-
 ther, and little cross accidents that befall them : and
 thus, if we had but the art and wisdom to do it,
 many of the lesser inconveniencies of human life
 might well enough be played off, and made matter
 rather of mirth and diversion, than of melancholy
 and serious trouble.

But

But there are some evils and calamities of human life, that are too heavy and serious to be jested withal, and require the greatest consideration, and a very great degree of patience to support us under them, and enable us to bear them decently; as the loss of friends and dearest relations; as the loss of an only son, grown up to be well fixt and settled in a virtuous course, and promising all the comfort to his parents that they themselves can wish: these certainly are some of the greatest evils of this world, and hardest to be born. For men may pretend what they will to philosophy, and contempt of the world, and of the perishing comforts and enjoyments of it; to the extirpation of their passions, and an insensibility of these things, which the weaker and undisciplined part of mankind keep such a wailing and lamentation about: but when all is done, nature hath framed us as we are, and hath planted in our nature strong inclinations and affections to our friends and relations; and these affections are as naturally moved upon such occasions, and pluck every string of our hearts as violently, as extreme hunger and thirst do gnaw upon our stomachs.

And therefore it is foolish for any man to pretend to love things mightily, and to rejoice greatly in the enjoyment of them; and yet to be so easily contented to lose them, and to be parted from them. This is to separate things which nature hath strongly linked together. Whatever we mightily love, does thereby in some sort become part of ourselves; and it cannot hang loose to us, to be separated and divorced from us without trouble; no more than a limb, that is vitally and by strong ligaments united to the body, can be lopt off when we please, or rent from the body without pain. And whoever pretends to have a mighty affection for any thing,
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and yet at the same time does pretend that he can contentedly, and without any great sense or signification of pain, bear the loss of it, does not talk like a philosopher, but like an hypocrite; and under a grave pretence of being a wise, is in truth, an ill-natured man. For most certainly, in proportion to our love of any thing, will be our trouble and grief for the loss of it.

So that under these great and heavier strokes, we had need both of faith and patience. And indeed, nothing but the firm belief of "a better country," that is, "an heavenly," of another life after this, and a blessed immortality in another world, is sufficient to support a man in the "few and evil days of his pilgrimage," and to sustain his spirit under the great evils and calamities of this life. But this fully answers all, "that the afflictions and sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Nay, that if we bear these afflictions patiently, and with a due submission to the will of God (especially our sufferings for his truth and cause) it will certainly increase our happiness in the other world, and "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

IV. The consideration of our present condition and of our future hopes, should set us above the fondness of life, and the slavish fears of death. For our minds will never be raised to their true pitch and height, till we have in some good measure conquered these two passions, and made them subject to our reason.

As for this present life, and the enjoyment of it; what is it that we see in them, that should make us so strangely to dote upon them? *Quæ lucis miseris tam*

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dira cupido! This world at the best is but a very indifferent place, and he is the wisest man that bears himself towards it with the most indifferent mind and affection; that is, always willing to leave it, and yet patient to stay in it as long as God pleaseth. And as for death, though the dread of it be natural, yet why should the terrors of it be so very surprizing and amazing to us, after we have considered, that to a good and pious soul, it is no other but the gate of heaven, and an entrance into eternal life? We are apt to wonder to see a man undaunted at the approach of death, and to be not only contented, but chearful, at the thoughts of his departure out of this world, this sink of sin, and vale of misery and sorrow. Whereas, if all things be duly considered, it is a greater wonder that men are so patient to live, and that they are not glad of any fair excuse and opportunity of getting out of this strange country, and retiring home, and of ridding themselves of the troubles and inconveniencies of life. For, considering the numerous troubles and calamities we are liable to in a long pilgrimage, there are really but three considerations that I can readily think of, that can make this world, and our present condition in it, in any good measure tolerable to a wise man; viz. That God governs the world; that we are not always to stay in it; that there is a happiness designed and reserved for us in another place, which will abundantly recompense and make amends to us for all the troubles and sufferings of this life.

And yet it is strange to see how fast most men cling to life, and that even in old age; how they catch at every twig that may but hold them up a little while; and how fondly they hanker after a miserable life, when there is nothing more of pleasure to
be

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be enjoyed, nothing more of satisfaction to be expected and hoped for in it. When they are just putting into the port, and, one would think, should rejoice at their very hearts, that they see land; yet how glad would they be then of any cross wind, that would carry them back into the sea again? As if they loved to be tost, and were fond of storms and tempests.

Nay, the very best of us, even after we have made that acknowledgment of David; "I am a stranger" "and a sojourner with thee, as all my fathers were;" are apt with him to be still importuning God for a little longer life; "O spare me a little, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." And when God hath granted us this request, then we would be spared yet a little longer.

But let us remember, that God did not design us to continue always in this world; and that he hath on purpose made it so uneasy to us, to make us willing to leave it: and that so long as we linger here below, we are detained from our happiness; "while" "we are present in the body, we are absent from the" "LORD." This consideration made St. Paul so "desirous to be dissolved," because "he knew, that" "when his earthly house of this tabernacle was dissolved, he should have a much better habitation," "a building of God, an house not made with hands," "eternal in the heavens." This was that which made him so full of joy and triumph, at the thoughts of his leaving the world: 2 Tim. iv. 6. "I am now" "ready" (says he) "to be offered up, and the time" "of my departure is at hand; I have fought a good" "fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the" "faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown" "of righteousness, which God the righteous judge" "shall give me in that day." Nay,

Nay, the consideration of this (though but obscurely apprehended by them) did raise the spirits of the wiser and better heathen, and fill them with great joy and comfort at the thoughts of their dissolution. With what constancy and evenness of mind did Socrates receive the sentence of death? And with what excellent discourse did he entertain his friends just before he drank off the fatal cup, and after he had taken it down, whilst death was gradually seizing upon him? One can hardly, without a very sensible transport, read Cato's discourse concerning his death, as it is represented by Tully in his book of old age. "I am" (says he) "transported with a desire of seeing my forefathers, those excellent persons of whom I have heard, and read, and written; and now I am going to them, I would not willingly be drawn back into this world again; *quod si quis Deus mihi largiatur, ut ex hac ætate repuerescam, & in cunis vagiam, valde recusem.* If some God would offer me, at this age, to be a child again, and to cry in the cradle, I would earnestly refuse it, and upon no terms accept it. And now that my race is almost run, and my course just finished, how loth should I be to be brought back, and made to begin again? For what advantage is there in life? Nay rather, what labour and trouble is there not in it? But let the benefit of it be what it will, there is certainly some measure of life, as well as of other things, and men ought to know when they have enough of it" *O præclarum diem, cum in illud animorum consilium cætumque proficiscar, & cum ex hac turba & colluvione discedam.* "O blessed and glorious day, when I shall go to that great council and assembly of spirits, and have got out of this crowd and rabble! And if a heathen, who had but

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some obscure glimmerings of another life, and of the blessed state of departed souls, could speak thus cheerfully of death; how much more may we, who have a clear and undoubted revelation of these things, and to whom "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel."

V. We should always prefer our duty and the keeping of a good conscience before all the world; because it is, in truth, infinitely more valuable, if so be our souls be immortal, and do survive in another world, and we must there give a strict account of all the actions done by us in this life, and receive the sentence of eternal happiness or misery, "according to the things done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil." For as our SAVIOUR argues concerning the case of denying him and his truth, to avoid temporal suffering and death; "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" When we are tempted by temporal interest and advantage, or by the fear of present loss and suffering, to deny or dissemble our religion, to do any thing that is sinful in any kind, and contrary to our duty and conscience, let us ask ourselves, what will be the profit and advantage of it? What, if for fear of men, and what they can do to me, I incur the wrath and displeasure of Almighty God? This is infinitely more to be dreaded; and his frowns are a thousand times more terrible, than the bitterest wrath and cruellest malice of men. What, if to preserve this frail and mortal body, I shall evidently hazard the loss of my immortal soul; and to escape a temporal inconvenience, I forfeit everlasting happiness, and plunge myself into eternal misery and ruin? Would not this be a wild bargain,

bargain and a mad exchange, for any temporal advantage to lose the things that are eternal? And for the pleasing of ourselves for a little while, to make ourselves miserable for ever?

If we confess ourselves to be “pilgrims and strangers on the earth,” and are persuaded of the promises of God concerning an “heavenly country,” where we hope to arrive after “the few and evil days of our pilgrimage” are over; let us not, by complying with the humours of strangers, and the vicious customs and practices of an evil world, bar ourselves of our hopes, and banish ourselves from that happy place, to which we all profess we are going.

We pretend to be travelling towards heaven: but if we “make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience,” we destroy our own hopes of ever arriving at that happy port. We do not live up to our expectation of a future happiness; if the unseen glories of another world do not raise us above all the temptations and terrors of sense. Our faith and hope have not their due and proper influence upon us, if they do not govern our lives and actions, and make us steadfast in the profession of our holy religion, and in the conscientious practice of it. St. Paul reasoned himself into this holy resolution, from the hopes of a blessed resurrection, Acts xxiv. 15, 16. “I have hope,” says he, “towards God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; ἐν τῷ τῷ δὲ, for this cause therefore, I exercise myself always to have a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards men.”

VI. And lastly, if we be sojourners and travellers in this world; we should often think of our end, and carefully mind the way to it. Our end is everlasting happiness, and the direct way to it is by

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a constant and sincere and universal obedience to the laws and commandments of GOD. And this in itself is so plain a way, that a sincere and honest man can hardly err in it. And therefore we must not suffer ourselves to be led and trained out of it, upon any pretence whatsoever; not by the wildfire of pretended illuminations and enthusiasms; nor by the confident pretence of an infallible guide, that will needs shew us another way, and persuade us to follow him blindfold in it. Let us not quit the infallible rule of GOD's word, to follow any guide whatsoever. "If an apostle, or an angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine" and way to heaven, "let him be accursed." He who is "the way, and the truth, and the life," when he was consulted with about the way to eternal happiness, knew no other but this. For when the young man asked him; "good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life?" His answer was, "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." It is true indeed, that by reason of our corrupt inclinations within, and powerful temptations without, this way (especially at our first setting out) is rugged and difficult. So our LORD hath forewarned us, telling us, that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth to life," and that "there be few that find it;" therefore we should "strive to enter in," take great care and pains to discern the right way, and to overcome the difficulties of our first entrance into it; and should often pray to GOD as David did, Psal. cxix. 19. "I am a stranger in the earth; hide not thy commandments from me;" and Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me, O GOD, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."

Thus,

Thus, if we would always have our end in our eye; it would both be a direction to us in our way, and an encouragement to quicken our pace in it; there being no more powerful motive to a good life, than to be assured, that, “if we have our fruit unto holiness, our end shall be everlasting life.”

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The presence of the Messias, the glory
of the second temple.

H A G G A I II. 6, 7, 8, 9.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

TH E author of this prophecy was the first of the three prophets, which God sent to the people of Israel after the captivity; and this prophecy contains several messages from God, to the princes,

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princes, and elders, and people of Israel, in which he reproves their slackness and negligence in the building of the temple, and encourageth them thereto, by the promise of his assistance; and tells them, that however in respect of the magnificence of the building, and the rich ornaments in it, it should be incomparably short of Solomon's temple, (which some that were then alive had seen in it's glory) yet in other respects it should far excel it; for the time would come, that this second temple should be graced with the presence of the Messias, which would be a greater glory to it, than all the riches of Solomon's temple.

And this is fully expressed in the words which I have read unto you, "thus saith the LORD of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts."

Now, that it is some very great thing which is here foretold and promised, for the honour of this second temple, no man can doubt, that considers in what a solemn manner it is here express'd; this great and glorious title, "the LORD of hosts," being no less than five several times used within the compass of these four verses; the like instance whereto is not, perhaps, in the whole bible: "thus saith the LORD of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth," ver. 6. "And I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of
"hosts,"

“hofts,” ver. 7. “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hofts,” ver. 8. And twice ver. 9. “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hofts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hofts.” So that by the solemn manner of expressing it, we may imagine, that it is some very great thing which is spoken of, and such as the like had never been before; and such was “the incarnation and coming of the Messias.”

I know that the modern Jews will by no means have this text to be understood of the Messias, and not without cause; for he that is spoken of in the text, was to come into the second temple, which hath now been destroyed above 1600 years ago; and they do not believe the Messias to be yet come; and therefore whatever shift they make, they must interpret this text, of some other person than the Messias: but then it is plain for what reason they do so, it being evident from their own Talmud, that the ancient Jews did understand it of the Messias; but being hardened in their unbelief, they pervert all those texts whereby they might be convinc’d, that JESUS our blessed SAVIOUR was the true Messias.

And indeed, whoever carefully considers the several expressions and circumstances of this prediction, cannot understand it of any other. To make this evident, I shall explain the several expressions in the text, “thus saith the LORD of hofts, yet once, it is a little while.” “Yet a little while,” so it is in the Hebrew, “yet once more,” so the LXXII render it, and so it is quoted from the LXXII in the new testament, Heb. xii. 26. and this sense the Hebrew word may likewise bear, and our translation of the text takes them both in, “yet once it is a little while.”

If

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If we take the words in the first sense, "yet a little while," they signify, that God was then beginning those changes in the world, which were to precede and make way for the coming of the Messias. This indeed was not till about four hundred years after; but a great while before that time God began those changes in the world, which were to prepare the way for his coming; and considering the long time which was past from the first promise made to Abraham, four hundred years in comparison of that may seem but a little while. But I rather choose the latter sense of this phrase, "yet once more;" because the Hebrew will bear it, and because it is so quoted in the new testament; as if the prophet had said, that God had before done a great thing in the world, and accompanied with great miracles, viz. "the giving of the law by Moses," which was attended with great commotions, both in Egypt, by bringing the people of Israel out from thence with a mighty hand, and by destroying the nations before them, whose land God gave them for a possession; but now he would do one greater thing more, "the sending of the Messias," and the "planting of his religion in the world;" in order whereunto there should be much greater, and more universal commotions and changes in the world, and more and greater miracles wrought; "yet once more, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations." From which words the apostle to the Hebrews argues the abolishing of the Jewish dispensation, and the bringing in of another that should be unalterable, Heb. xii. 27. "And this word, yet once more," (says the apostle) signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, that those things which

"cannot be shaken may remain." And this I shall S E R M.
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have occasion to explain more fully in the following parts of this discourse.

"Yet once more I will shake the heavens and the earth," &c. For the understanding whereof we are to consider, that the Hebrews have no one word whereby to express the world, and therefore they do it by an enumeration of the principal parts of it. So Gen. i. when Moses would express the creation of the world, he says, "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." And so St. Peter, when he would express the revolution of all things, after the universal conflagration of the world, calls it, "a new heaven, and a new earth," 2 Pet. iii. 13. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth;" that is, a new world, a quite other frame and state of things, than that which we now see. And so the prophet here in the text, to express the great commotions and changes, that should be in the world before the coming of the Messias, says, that God "will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry lands;" that is, he would cause great revolutions in the world; there should be great wars and confusions, and the empires of the world should pass from one hand to another. And thus we find this very expression interpreted, ver. 21, 22. of this chapter, "I will shake the heavens and the earth, and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations." And to shew that by "shaking the heavens and the earth," is meant great changes in the world, and as it were an universal commotion of it, he adds in the text, by way of farther explanation, "and I will shake all nations."

And then it follows, “ and the desire of all nations shall come.” This we (as the ancient Jews also did) take to be a plain character and description of the Messias, he is “ the desire of all nations;” he whom all nations had reason to desire, because of those great blessings and benefits which he was to bring to the world. Thus interpreters generally understand these words, and it is very true the Messias was so: but this does not seem to be the true importance of this phrase; for the Hebrew word signifies expectation as well as desire, and so I should rather choose to render it, “ the expectation of all nations shall come;” which signifies that about the time of the coming of the Messias, not only the Jews, but other nations, should be in a general expectation of some great prince then to appear; which was most eminently accomplished in our blessed SAVIOUR, as I shall shew by and by.

“ And I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts,” speaking of the second temple, which was then in building, which though it fell very much short of Solomon’s, in point of state and magnificence; yet by being honoured with the presence of the Messias, it should be much more glorious than Solomon’s temple. “ The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts;” not that God wanted the command of gold and silver, to have made the second temple equal to Solomon’s in outward glory and splendor; he could easily have made it so in that respect; and Josephus tells us, that not long before the time of our SAVIOUR’s coming, Herod had built and beautified it to that degree, that in some respects it excelled Solomon’s; and of this some understand the next words, “ the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the

“the former;” namely, that this was accomplished in that beauty and magnificence which was added to it, when it was re-edified by Herod the great: but however that be, this is certain, that it was much more glorious in another respect, namely, that it entertained the “Messias, the great expectation and “blessing of all nations.”

“And in this place will I give peace, saith the “LORD of hosts.” Some understand this, of that universal peace which was throughout the world, when our SAVIOUR was born in the reign of Augustus Cæsar. Others with great probability interpret this of the Messias himself, who is called here by the name of peace; and so some of the ancient Jews understood it; “in this place will I give peace,” that is, the Messias. For the Hebrew word signifies all kind of happiness, and so it includes all those blessings and benefits, that happiness and salvation which the Messias brought to the world. And this will appear very probable, if we consider, how frequently in scripture this title is given to the Messias. Isa. ix. 6. he is called “the prince of peace;” and Zach. ix. 10. it is said of him, “that he should speak “peace to the nations;” and the apostle to the Hebrews, parallels him with Melchisedech in this particular, “that he was king of Salem,” that is, “king “of peace; and which is very little different from this, he is frequently in scripture called salvation, which signifies the happiness of being rescued and delivered from all kind of evil; as peace signifies all kind of good, Isa. xlix. 6. “I will also give thee “for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my “salvation to the end of the earth:” and Luke ii. 30. when Simeon had our blessed SAVIOUR in his arms, when he was first brought into the temple, he

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calls him the salvation of GOD; "mine eyes" (saith he to GOD) "have seen thy salvation;" and John iv. 22. "salvation is of the Jews," that is, the Messias was to be of that nation. But which is more express, CHRIST is called "our peace," Eph. ii. 14. nay, he is expressly called peace, or the peace, Mic. v. 5. "and this man (speaking of the Messias) shall "be the peace," that is, one of his names or titles shall be peace. So that I make little doubt, but that in this expression in the text, of "giving peace," is meant, giving the Messias; and that this is render'd as the reason, why the glory of the second temple should be greater than of the first, because in that place the Messias should appear, and remarkably shew himself. GOD could have given this second temple, if he had thought fit, as much outward glory and beauty as that of Solomon's building; for "silver and gold are his," and all the riches of the world are at his command; but he chose to put a far greater honour upon it than that of silver and gold, and to make it much more glorious in another respect, "the glory of this latter house shall "be greater than of the former; because in this "place I will give the Messias the peace," and happiness and salvation of mankind, and incomparably the greatest blessing that ever was given to the world.

The words being thus explained, it will now be more easy to shew, how the several parts of this prediction do agree to our blessed SAVIOUR, and to no other.

I. That there should be great changes and commotions in the world before his coming; "I will "shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and "the dry land, and I will shake all nations;" and then he should come.

II. That

II. That about the time of his coming, the world should be in a general expectation of him; "and the expectation of all nations shall come."

III. That he should come during the continuance of the second temple; for it was his coming that should fill that house with glory, and in that place the Messiah, who is called peace, is promised to be given; "and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts."

IV. That this coming of the Messiah should be the last dispensation of God for the salvation of men, and consequently should be perpetual and unalterable: "yet once more, and I will shake the heavens and the earth; yet once more," from whence the apostle to the Hebrews argues, that the gospel should be a perpetual and unalterable dispensation. Of these I shall speak severally, and as briefly as I can.

I. Here is a prediction of great changes and commotions in the world, before the coming of the Messiah; "thus saith the LORD of hosts, I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come;" plainly signifying hereby, that before the coming of the Messiah (who is here called "the desire and expectation of all nations") there should be very great commotions and changes in the world, that the empire of the world should be overturned; for so I have told you, that this expression of "shaking the heavens, and the earth" is explained, verse 21. of this chapter, "I will shake the heavens and the earth, and will overthrow the throne of kingdoms." And this was fulfilled in a most remarkable manner, between the time of this prophecy, and the coming of our blessed SAVIOUR, during which time (though it was but

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but four hundred years) there happened greater commotions, and much more considerable revolutions, in the great kingdoms of the world, than had done in above two thousand years before, and in almost one thousand seven hundred years since ; so that it is no wonder, that the prediction of these things is by God himself express'd in so very solemn a manner, as I observed before.

At the time of this prophecy, the empire of the world was newly translated from the Assyrians to the Medes and Persians ; and not long after, the Grecians under Alexander the great quite overthrew the Persian empire, and that by as sudden a change as was ever perhaps made in the world, possessing themselves by so swift and speedy a conquest of a great part of the then known world, as if to pass through it, and to conquer it, had been all one.

After the death of Alexander, the empire of the Grecians was shared among his great captains, whom the Romans by degrees conquered, besides a great many other kingdoms which Alexander never saw, and some of them perhaps had never heard of. And at last the empire of the world, in all it's greatness and glory, was possess'd by Augustus, in whose time our blessed SAVIOUR was born.

So that here were mighty commotions in the world, wonderful changes of kingdoms and empires, before the coming of the Messias ; far greater, and of much larger extent, than those that were in Egypt and Palestine, at the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and the giving of the law from mount Sinai. And these did not only go before the coming of the Messias, but they made way for the more easy propagating of his doctrine and religion ; for the Grecians, and especially the Romans, settled their

their conquests in such a manner, as in a good measure to propagate their language among the nations which they conquered; and particularly the Romans did make the ways for travel and commerce much more easy and commodious than ever they were before, by employing their armies, when they had no other work, to make high-ways, for the convenience of passage from the station of one legion to another; the benefit and effect whereof we in England enjoy to this day; (a pattern to all princes and states that have necessary occasion for armies, how to employ them;) and this very thing proved afterwards a mighty advantage for the more easy and speedy spreading of christianity in the world.

II. Another part of this prophecy is, that about the time of the coming of the Messias, the world should be in a general expectation of him; "and the expectation of all nations shall come:" and I doubt not but this character of the Messias is taken out of that famous prophecy concerning him, Gen. xlix. 10. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, till Shiloh come," (and by Shiloh the ancient Jews generally understood the Messias) "and to him shall the gathering of the people be;" or as it is rendered by the Septuagint, and several other translations, "and he shall be the expectation of the nations." In allusion to which ancient prophecy concerning him, he is here in the text called, "the expectation of all nations;" and so by the prophet Malachi, chap. iii. ver. 1. "and the LORD whom ye expect," or look for, "shall suddenly come into his temple." Now this part of the prediction in the text, was most eminently fulfilled in our blessed SAVIOUR. For about the time of his coming, the Jews were in a general expectation of him,

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as appears not only from that ancient and general tradition of theirs, from the school of Elias, “that at the end of the second two thousand years of the world, the Messias should come;” (and our blessed SAVIOUR’s coming did accordingly happen at that time;) but likewise from that particular computation of the Jewish doctors, not long before our SAVIOUR’s coming, who, upon a solemn debate of the matter, did determine that the Messias would come within fifty years. And this is farther confirmed, from the great jealousy which Herod had concerning “a king of the Jews,” that was expected to be born about that time; and from that remarkable testimony in Josephus, who tells us, “that the Jews rebelled against the Romans, being encouraged thereto by a famous prophecy in their scriptures, that about that time a great prince should be born among them, that should rule the world:” and Josephus flattered Vespasian so far, as to make him believe that he was the man; and thereupon persuaded him to destroy the line of David, out of which the tradition was, that the Messias should spring; as if the accomplishment of a divine prediction could be hindered by any human endeavour.

And this was not only the general expectation of the Jews about that time, but of a great part of the world; as appears from those two famous testimonies of two of the most eminent historians, Suetonius and Tacitus. The words of Suetonius are these, *Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus & constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut Judæa profecti rerum potirentur*: “there was an ancient and general opinion, famous throughout all the eastern parts, that the fates had determined, that there should come out of Judea those that should govern the world;” and he adds what

I quoted

I quoted before out of Josephus, *id Judei ad se trahentes rebellant*; "that the Jews taking this to themselves, did thereupon rebel." Now it is very remarkable, that the very words of this tradition seem to be a verbal translation of that prophecy in Micah, "that out of Judah should come the governor:" *ut Judæa profecti rerum potirentur*. The other testimony is out of Tacitus; and his words are these, (lib. 21. §. 13.) *Pluribus persuasio inerat antiquis sacerdotum libris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret oriens, profectique Judæâ rerum potirentur*: "a great many (says he) were possessed with a persuasion that it was contained in the ancient books of the priests, that at that very time the east should prevail, and that they who should govern the world, were to come out of Judea." By the ancient books of the priests, he in all probability means, the ancient prophecies of scripture; for the last expression is the same with that of Suetonius taken out of the prophet Micah; and the other, "that the east should prevail," does plainly refer to that title given to the Messias by the prophet Zachary, chap. vi. 12. where he is called, "the man whose name is צמח," which signifies oriens and germen, both the "east" and "a branch;" our translation hath it, "the man whose name is the branch;" but it might as well be rendered, "the man whose name is the east." Thus you see this character of our SAVIOUR in this prophecy most literally fulfilled, that he was "the expectation of all nations." I proceed to the

III. Circumstance of this prediction, that he who is here foretold, should come during the continuance of this second temple; because it was his presence, that should "fill that house with glory;" and it was

in that place that the Messias, who is called "the peace," is promised to be given; "and in this place will I give peace; saith the LORD of hosts." And this is likewise most expressly foretold by the prophet Malachi, chap. iii. 1. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the LORD, whom ye look for, shall suddenly come into his temple; even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in, behold he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts:" And accordingly JESUS our blessed SAVIOUR came during the second temple; he was presented there by his parents, and owned by Simeon for the Messias; he disputed there, and taught frequently there, and by his presence "filled that house with glory." For that the Son of GOD taught publickly there, was a greater honour to it, than all the silver and gold of Solomon's temple.

And not long after his death (according to his express prediction) this second temple was destroyed to the ground; "so that not one stone of it was left upon another." And when some hundred of years after, it was attempted to be rebuilt three several times, the last whereof was by Julian the apostate, in opposition to christianity, and to our SAVIOUR's prediction; fire came out of the foundation, and destroyed the workmen; so that they desisted in great terror, and durst never attempt it afterwards. And this not only the christian writers of that age in great numbers do testify, but Ammianus Marcellinus (a heathen historian who lived in that time) does also give us a very particular account of this memorable matter. So that if by "the expectation of the nations" be here meant "the Messias," (as I have plainly shewn) then he is long since come, and was

no other than JESUS our blessed SAVIOUR, who according to this prophecy, "was to fill the second temple with glory;" which hath now been demolished above one thousand six hundred years ago, and the rebuilding whereof hath been so often and so remarkably hindered from heaven. The consideration of all which were sufficient to convince the Jews of their vain expectation of a Messias yet to come; were they not so obstinately rooted and fixed in their infidelity. There remains now the

IV. And last circumstance of this prophecy, viz. that the coming of the Messias was to be the last dispensation of GOD, for the salvation of men; and consequently was to be perpetual and unchangeable: "Yet once more, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the expectation of all nations shall come." Yet once more; from which words, the apostle to the Hebrews argues the perpetuity of the gospel, and that it was the dispensation which should never be changed, Heb. xii. 27. "And this word, yet once more, signifies, the removing of those things which are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." And then it follows, "wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, &c." It was usual with the Jews to describe the times of the gospel, by "the kingdom of the Messias;" and accordingly the apostle here calls the dispensation of the gospel, "a kingdom which cannot be moved:" in opposition to the law, which was an imperfect and alterable dispensation. For this is plainly the scope of the apostle's reasoning; namely, to convince the Jews, that they were now under a more gracious and perfect dispensation

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fation than that of the law, ver. 18. "Ye are not
" come unto the mount, that might be touched,
" and that burned with fire ;" meaning mount Sinai,
which was a sensible literal mountain, " a mountain
" that might be touched," in opposition to the my-
stical and spiritual mount Sion ; by which the dis-
pensation of the gospel is described : which by the
way prevents the objection of it's being called " the
" mountain that might be touched," when it was
forbidden to be touched upon pain of death ; " Ye
" are not come to the mount that might be touched ;"
that is, I am not now speaking of a literal and sensible
mountain, such as was mount Sinai, from whence
the law was given ; but of that spiritual and heaven-
ly dispensation of the gospel, which was typified by
mount Sion and by Jerusalem ; " but ye are come
" to mount Sion, and unto the city of the living
" God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to Jesus the
" Mediator of the new covenant." And then he
cautions them to take heed how they reject him that
came from heaven, to make this last revelation of
God to the world ; which, because of the clearness
and perfection of it, should never need to receive a-
ny change, ver. 25. " See that ye refuse not him
" that speaketh ; for if they escaped not, who refused
" him that spake on earth," (viz. Moses, who de-
livered the law from mount Sinai) " much more shall
" not we escape, if we turn away from him that
" speaketh from heaven : whose voice then shook the
" earth," (alluding to the earthquake at the giving
of the law) " but now he hath promised, saying, yet
" once more, I shake not the earth only ; but also
" heaven ;" that is, " the whole world," in order
to the coming of the Messias, and the planting of the
gospel in the world ; and then he argues from the

words

words "once more," that the former dispensation should be removed, to make way for that which should perpetually remain.

And indeed there is no need of any farther revelation after this ; nor of any change of that religion which was brought from heaven by the Son of God ; because of the perfection of it, and it's fitness to reform the world, and to recover mankind out of their lapsed and degenerate condition, and to bring them to happiness ; both by the purity of it's doctrine, and the power of it's arguments to work upon the minds of men, by the clear discovery of the mighty rewards and punishments of another world.

And now the proper inference from all this discourse, is the very same with that which the apostle makes, from the consideration of the perfection and excellency of this revelation, which God had made to the world by his Son. " See that ye refuse not him that speaketh : for how shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven ? " And at the 28th verse of that chapter, " wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear ; " that is, let us live as becomes those to whom God hath made so clear and perfect a revelation of his will. We have all the advantages of the divine revelation which the world ever had, and the last and most perfect that the world ever shall have : We have not only Moses and the prophets, but that doctrine which the Son of God came down from heaven on purpose to declare to the world. God hath vouchsafed to us that clear and complete revelation of his will, which he denied to " many prophets and righteous men ; who desired to see the
" things

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“ which we see, but could not see them; and to
“ hear the things which we hear, but could not hear
“ them.” There were good men in the world under
those imperfect revelations which God made to them;
but we have far greater advantages, and more powerful arguments to be good than ever they had. And as we ought thankfully to acknowledge these blessed advantages; so ought we likewise, with the greatest care and diligence, to improve them.

And now how does the serious consideration of this, condemn all impenitent sinners under the gospel, who will not be reclaimed from their sins, and persuaded to goodness, by all that God can do; by the most plain declaration of his will to the world, by the most perfect precepts and directions for a good life; by the most encouraging promises to obedience, and by the most severe threatenings of an eternal and unutterable ruin, in case of disobedience; “ by the
“ wrath of God, revealed from heaven, against all
“ ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;” by the terrors of the great day, and the vengeance of eternal fire; by the wonderful and amazing condescension of the Son of God, appearing in our nature; by his merciful undertaking for the redemption of lost and sinful man; by his cruel sufferings for our sins, and by the kindest offers of pardon and reconciliation in his blood, and by the glorious hopes of eternal life!

What could God have done more for us, than he hath done? What greater concernment could he shew for our salvation, than “ to send his own Son, his
“ only Son, to seek and save us?” And what greater demonstration could he give of his love to us, than
“ to give the Son of his love to die for us?” This is the last effort that the divine mercy and goodness will make upon mankind. So the apostle tells us in the

beginning of this epistle, chap. i. 1. that "God who
" at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in
" times past unto the fathers, by the prophets, hath
" in these last days, spoken to us by his Son:" and
if we will not hear him, he will speak no more; af-
ter this it is not to be expected that he should make
any farther attempts for our recovery, he can send
no greater and dearer person to us, than "his own
" Son." If we despise him; whom will we reve-
rence? If we reject him, and the great salvation
which he brings and offers to us; we have all the rea-
son in the world to believe that our case is desperate,
and that we shall "die in our sins." "This was the
" condemnation of the Jews, that they did not re-
" ceive and believe on him whom God had sent."
And if we who profess to believe on him, and to re-
ceive his doctrine, be found disobedient to it, in our
lives, we have reason to fear that our condemnation
shall be far heavier than theirs: for since the appea-
rance of "the Son of God" for the salvation of men,
"the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against
"all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," e-
specially against those "who detain the truth of God
"in unrighteousness;" that is, against those who
entertain the light of God's truth in their minds,
but do not suffer it to have it's proper effect and in-
fluence upon their hearts and lives; and make that a
prisoner, which would make them free. So our
LORD tells us, that "the truth shall make us free;"
but if "after we have received the knowledge of the
"truth," we are still "the servants of sin;" our
condemnation is much worse, than if "the Son of
"God" had never come: for the christian religion
hath done nothing; if it do not take men off from
their sins, and teach them to live well.

Especially

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Especially at this time when we are celebrating “ the coming of this Son of God, to destroy the “ works of the devil,” we should take great heed, that we be not found guilty of any impiety or wickedness; because this is directly contrary to the main design “ of the grace of God, which brings salvation, and hath appeared to all men,” (and the appearance whereof we do at this time commemorate) for that “ teacheth men to deny ungodliness and “ worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously “ and godlily in this present world:” and we cannot gratify the devil more, than by shewing ourselves more diligent than ordinary to uphold his works, at “ this very time,” when “ the Son of God was manifested” on purpose “ to dissolve them:” we cannot possibly choose a worse, a more improper season to sin in, than when we are celebrating the birth of the blessed JESUS, who came “ to save us from our “ sins.” This is, as if a sick man, for joy that a famous physician is come to his house, should run into all manner of excess, and so do all he can to inflame his disease, and make his case desperate. Not but that our inward joy may lawfully be accompanied with all outward innocent expressions of it: but we cannot be truly thankful, if we allow ourselves at this time in any thing contrary to the purity and sobriety of the gospel. It is matter of just and sad complaint, being of great scandal to our SAVIOUR, and his holy religion, that such irregular and extravagant things are at this time commonly done by many, who call themselves Christians; and done under a pretence of doing honour to the memory of CHRIST’S birth; as if, because the Son of God was at this time made man, it were fit for men to make themselves beasts.

If we would honour him indeed, we must take care that our joy do not degenerate into sin and sensuality, and that we do not express it by leudness and luxury, by intemperance and excess, by prodigal gaming, and profuse wasting of our estates, "as the manner of some is;" as if we intended literally to requite our SAVIOUR, "who being rich, for our sakes became poor." This is a way of "parting with houses and land, and becoming poor for his sake," for which he will never thank, nor reward us. This is not to commemorate the coming of our SAVIOUR, but to contradict it, and openly to declare that we will uphold "the works of the devil," in despite of "the Son of God, who came to destroy them." It is for all the world like that leud and senseless piece of loyalty, too much in fashion some years ago, of being drunk for the king. Good God! that ever it should pass for a piece of religion among Christians, to run into all manner of excess for twelve days together, in honour of our SAVIOUR! A greater aggravation of sin cannot easily be imagined, than to abuse the memory of the greatest blessing that ever was, "CHRIST coming into the world to take away sin," into an opportunity of committing it; this is to represent the Son of God as a patron of sin and licentiousness, and to treat him more contumeliously than the Jews did, who bowed the knee to him, and mocked him, and called him king, and spat upon him; and, under a pretence of rejoicing for his birth, "to crucify to ourselves afresh the LORD of life and glory; and to put him to an open shame."

I will conclude all with the apostle's exhortation, Rom. xiii. 12, 13, 14. "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk decently as in the day; not in rioting

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“ and drunkenness, not in chambering and wanton-
“ ness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on
“ the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision
“ for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof.”

Now to our most gracious and merciful God, the great friend and lover of souls, who regarded us in our low and lost condition, and cast an eye of pity upon us, when “ we were in our blood, and no
“ other eye pitied us,” and when we had lost and ruined our selves, was pleased in tender compassion to mankind, “ to send his only begotten Son into
“ the world to seek and save us,” and by the purity of his doctrine, and the pattern of his life, and the sacrifice of his death, to purchase eternal life for us, and to direct and lead us in the way to it: and to him also, the blessed SAVIOUR and redeemer of mankind, who came down from heaven, that he might carry us thither, and took human nature upon him, that we thereby might be “ made partakers of a divine na-
“ ture;” and “ humbled himself to death, even the
“ death of the cross,” that he might exalt us to glory and honour, and whilst we were bitter enemies to him, gave such a demonstration of his love to us, as never any man did to his best friend: “ Unto him
“ that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb that
“ was slain, to God, even our Father, and to our
“ LORD JESUS CHRIST, the first begotten from the
“ dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, to
“ him who hath loved us, and washed us from our
“ sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and
“ priests unto God and his Father, to him be
“ glory and honour, dominion and power, now and
“ for ever. Amen.”

S E R-

S E R M O N LXXI.

CHRIST JESUS, the only mediator between God and men.

Preached
at St. Peter's Corn-
hill on the
feast of
the an-
nunciation
1691.

I TIM. II. 5, 6.

For there is one GOD, and one mediator between GOD and men, the man CHRIST JESUS; who gave himself a ransom for all.

THESE words contain in them these four propositions; three of them express, and the fourth of them sufficiently implied in the text.

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The first
sermon on
this text.

I. "That there is one GOD."

II. "That there is one mediator between GOD and men; CHRIST JESUS."

III. "That he gave himself a ransom for all."

IV. "That the mediation or intercession of JESUS CHRIST, is founded in the redemption of mankind." For this seems to be the reason why it is added, that "he gave himself a ransom for all," to signify to us, that because "he gave himself a ransom for all," therefore he intercedes for all. In virtue of that sacrifice which he offered to GOD for the salvation of men, he offers up our prayers to GOD: and therefore it is acceptable to him, "that we should pray for all men." This seems to be the true connexion of the apostle's discourse, and the force of his reasoning, about our putting up "public prayers for all men."

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See a sermon concerning the unity of the divine nature, printed in the year 1693.

I have in a former discourse handled the first of these. I proceed now to the

II. That "there is one mediator between God and men, the man CHRIST JESUS." One mediator, that is, but one; for the expression is the very same concerning one God, and one mediator; and therefore if the apostle when he says, "there is one God," certainly means that there is but one God; it is equally certain, that when he says, "there is one mediator between God and men," he means, there is but one mediator, viz. CHRIST JESUS. He is the only mediator between God and men.

In the handling of this argument, I shall proceed in this method.

1. I shall endeavour to shew, that God hath appointed but one mediator, or advocate, or intercessor in heaven for us; in whose name, and by whose mediation and intercession, we are to offer up our prayers and services to God.

2. That this is most agreeable to one main end and design of the christian religion, and of our SAVIOUR's coming into the world.

3. That it is likewise evident from the nature and reason of the thing itself, that "there is but one mediator" and intercessor in heaven for us, to offer up our prayers to God; and that there can be no more. And then

4. And lastly, I shall endeavour to shew, how contrary to the doctrine of the christian religion, concerning "one mediator and intercessor in heaven for us," the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter is, in their invocation of angels, and the blessed virgin, and the saints, and making use of their mediation and intercession with God for sinners; as likewise how contrary it is to the doctrine
and

and practice of the primitive christian church : and then I shall answer their several pretences for this doctrine and practice ; and shew that this practice is not only needless, but useless and unprofitable ; and not only so, but very dangerous and impious.

First, I shall endeavour to shew, that GOD hath appointed but one mediator, or advocate, or intercessor in heaven for us, in whose name, and by whose intercession we are to offer up all our prayers and services to GOD.

Besides that it is expressly said here in the text, " there is but one mediator between GOD and men, " the man CHRIST JESUS," and that the scripture no where mentions any other ; I say, besides this, we are constantly directed to offer up our prayers and thanksgivings, and to perform all acts of worship in his name, and no other ; and with a promise, that the prayers and services, which we offer in his name, will be graciously answered and accepted : John xiv. 13, 14. " Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that " will I do ; that the Father may be glorified in the " Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I " will do it." And chap. xvi. 23, 24. " And in " that day ye shall ask me nothing ; verily, verily, " I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father " in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have " ye asked nothing in my name ; ask and ye shall " receive, that your joy may be full." In that day, that is, when I have left the world, and am gone to my Father, as he explains it at the 28th verse, " ye shall ask me nothing ; but whatsoever " ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give " it you." That is, you shall not need to address your prayers to me, but to my Father in my name. And ver. 26, 27. " At that day ye shall ask in my " name ;"

“ name ;” that is, from the time that I am ascended into heaven, ye shall put up all your prayers and requests to GOD in my name ; “ and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you ; for the Father himself loveth you ;” that is, I need not tell you (though I shall certainly do it) that I will intercede with the Father for you ; for he of himself is kindly disposed and affected towards you, for my sake ; “ the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me.”

St. Paul likewise commands Christians to perform all acts of religious worship in the name of CHRIST: Col. iii. 16, 17. “ Singing with grace in your hearts to the LORD, and whatsoever ye do in word and deed, do all in the name of the LORD JESUS, giving thanks to GOD and the Father by him.” And this precept of addressing all our prayers or thanksgivings to GOD, by JESUS CHRIST, as the only mediator between GOD and us, is the more remarkable, because it is given in opposition to the worshipping of GOD by any other mediators and intercessors in heaven for us ; and to that superstition which had begun so early to prevail among some Christians at Colosse and Laodicea, of worshipping GOD by the mediation and intercession of angels, against which he had cautioned in the former chapter, ver. 18, 19. “ Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, not holding the head.” Intimating, that for Christians to address themselves to GOD, by any other mediator, but JESUS CHRIST only, was a defection from CHRIST “ the head,” and “ high priest of our profession.” And that this is the apostle’s meaning, Theodoret assures us, in his comment upon this place, where he tells us, that some

who maintained an observance of the law, together with the gospel, asserted also, that angels were to be worshipped; saying, "that the law was given by them." And this custom, he tells us, remained a long time in Phrygia and Pisidia, and that upon this account it was, that the synod of Laodicea in Phrygia (about the middle of the fourth century) forbade Christians by a law, to pray to angels. And yet more expressly in his comment upon those words, chap. iii. 17. "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the LORD JESUS, giving thanks to GOD and the Father by him." For because (says he) they" (meaning those of whom St. Paul warns the Colossians to beware) "because they did command men to worship angels, he enjoins the contrary; that they should adorn both their words and actions with the memory (or mention) of the name of CHRIST their LORD: and send ye up (saith he) thanksgiving to GOD and the Father by him, and not by the angels." And then he makes mention of the canon of the synod of Laodicea, "which (says he) in pursuance of this rule, and being desirous to cure that old disease, made it a law, that none should pray unto angels, nor forsake the LORD JESUS CHRIST." It seems then that some relicks of that impious custom, of praying to angels, which Theodoret here calls, "that old disease," had continued from St. Paul's time, to the council of Laodicea, which was the occasion of that severe canon then made about that matter; the very words whereof I will set down, because they are remarkable; viz. "that Christians ought not to forsake the church of GOD, and go away from it, and to invoke angels, and to make conventicles, all which are forbidden. If any there-

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“fore be found giving himself to this secret idolatry, let him be anathema; because he hath forsaken our LORD JESUS CHRIST the Son of God, and is gone over to idolatry.” What shall be said to them, who do not only secretly, and in their private devotions, but in the publick assemblies of Christians, and in the most publick offices of their church, invoke angels, and pray to them? So that it was praying to angels (or making use of them as mediators and intercessors with God for us) which St. Paul here reproves so severely in the Colossians, as a defection from CHRIST and the christian religion.

And indeed, considering how frequently the scripture speaks of CHRIST, as “our only way to God, and by whom alone we have access to the throne of grace,” we cannot doubt, but that God hath constituted him our only mediator and intercessor, by whom we are to address all our requests to God, John xiv. 6. JESUS there saith unto Thomas, “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me.” “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” that is, the true and living way to the Father (which the apostle calls “a new and living way,” Heb. x. 19, 20. “Having therefore boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of JESUS, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us.”) “No man cometh to the Father but by me;” that is, we can have no access to God by prayer, or by any other acts of religious worship, but by him. So St. Paul tells us, Eph. ii. 18. “For through him (speaking of CHRIST) we both have an access by one spirit unto the Father.” We both, that is, both Jews and Gentiles. Under the law the Jews had access to God by

by their high priest, who interceded with God, and offered up prayers in behalf of the people. The Gentiles, they addressed themselves to God by innumerable mediators, by angels, and the souls of their departed heroes, which were the pagan saints. Instead of all these, God hath appointed one mediator and intercessor in heaven for us, "JESUS the Son of God, and "by him all mankind," both Jews and Gentiles, "have access by one spirit unto the Father."

And we have no need of any other, as the apostle to the Hebrews reasons, chap. vii. 24, 25. "But "this person (speaking of CHRIST) because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, "*ἀπαράβατον*, a priesthood which doth not pass "from one to another," as the priesthood under the law did, when upon the death of one high priest, another succeeded in his place; but our high priest under the gospel, "since he abides for ever, is able "to save to the uttermost all those that come to God "by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession "for us." So that JESUS CHRIST is an all-sufficient mediator, and able to carry on and accomplish the work of our salvation from first to last: and as we do not find, that God hath appointed any other; so we are sure, that there needs no other, "since he "is able to save to the uttermost all those that come "to God by him, and that he lives for ever to make "intercession for us."

Secondly, I proceed now in the second place, to shew, that this doctrine or principle of "one mediator between God and man," is most agreeable to one main end and design of the christian religion, and of our SAVIOUR's coming into the world, which was "to destroy idolatry out of the world;" which St. John calls "the works of the devil," 1 John

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iii. 8. " for this purpose the Son of GOD was manifested, that he might destroy, *ἵνα λύσῃ*, that he might dissolve or demolish the works of the devil;" by which St. John does more especially mean the idolatrous worship of the heathen, which consisted in the multitude of their gods and the bloody and barbarous rites and sacrifices, whereby they worshipped them; and likewise in the multitude of their mediators between the gods and men, who were also esteemed by them an inferior sort of deities. Both these kinds of idolatry had strangely prevailed, and over-run the world, before the appearance of our LORD and SAVIOUR, who came on purpose to deliver mankind from the horrible superstition and slavery of the worship of false gods, to pull down this kingdom of the devil, and to demolish that fabrick which he hath been so long a rearing, and to beat him out of those strong holds, which he thought had been impregnable.

GOD indeed gave some check to these, many ages before, and not long after their first appearance, by the Jewish religion, which was on purpose introduced, and confirmed, and established by so many and such mighty miracles to preserve and keep alive in the world the primitive tradition and belief " of the " one true GOD;" and likewise to be (as it were) some shadow and rude draught of that more perfect dispensation of the christian religion which by " one " sacrifice once offered," and by " one mediator " between GOD and men," was to put an end to the infinite superstitions of the heathen worship, and all the bloody and barbarous rites of it, and likewise to the idolatry they were guilty of, in the worship of their inferior deities, whom they looked upon as a middle sort of powers between the gods and men, and

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and therefore addressed themselves to them, as mediators between the superior and heavenly gods, and men here on earth. This was plainly one of the great designs of the christian religion ; and therefore it concerns Christians to understand it, and to be very careful, that they do not suffer themselves to be deluded by any specious pretences whatsoever, to bring these things back again into the christian religion, for the ruin and extirpation whereof, it was purposely designed and intended.

And this seems plainly to be the meaning of that caution, wherewith St. John concludes his catholick or general epistle, namely, that Christians should be very careful, that they were not carried back again into the heathen idolatry, by the confident pretences of the Gnostick hereticks to higher degrees of knowledge and illumination, than other Christians had: that is, by their pretending to be “ the infallible church, and “ the only true and genuine Christians.” For it is, against this sect, that this epistle is plainly designed, which St. John thus concludes, chap. v. from ver. 18. to the end ; “ we know that whosoever is born “ of GOD sinneth not ;” meaning that he doth not commit the “ sin unto death,” which he had spoken of just before, viz. apostasy from christianity to the heathen idolatry, or that which was very like it) “ whosoever is born of GOD doth not commit this “ sin, but he that is begotten of GOD, keepeth him- “ self, and that wicked one toucheth him not ;” that is, he preserveth himself from the contagion of idolatry into which the devil was so busy to seduce mankind. “ And we know that we are of GOD ;” that is, do belong to the true GOD, and are worshippers of him : “ and the whole world lyeth in wickedness, “ ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ καὶ τῷ, is in the power, or under the

“dominion of that wicked one;” that is, the greatest part of mankind was sunk into idolatry, and the worship of the devil. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.” We know, that is, we Christians are better taught by the christian religion, to acknowledge and worship the only true God: “and we are in him that is true, in” or “by his Son JESUS CHRIST;” that is, we worship the only true God, by his Son JESUS CHRIST. And then he concludes, “little children keep yourselves from idols;” intimating hereby, that the worshipping of any other, besides this only true God, and by any other mediator than JESUS CHRIST, is idolatry.

There were indeed two very ancient and common notions, both amongst Jews and Gentiles, of the original whereof it is hard to give any certain account; only this is certain, that they did prevail very early, and did very generally possess mankind; and they were these; first, that God was not to be appeased towards sinners, merely upon their repentance, without the death and suffering of some other in their stead; and that God would accept of this vicarious punishment and suffering, instead of the death of the sinner himself. And this seems to have given the original to the sacrifices of living creatures, to appease the wrath of God towards sinners, which in process of time, as the worship of false gods prevailed in the world, did proceed to that degree of superstition and barbarous inhumanity, that by the instigation of the devil, men offered up the blood of their children, and sacrificed their sons and daughters to their idols and false gods. Secondly, another common notion, which had likewise possessed mankind, was, that God

was

was not to be immediately approached by sinful men, but that their prayers were to be offered up to the deity, by certain mediators and intercessors, that were to procure for them the favour of the gods, and the gracious answer and acceptance of their prayers. And this was the original of that other sort of heathen idolatry, which consisted in the worship of the demons and heroes, that is, of angels and souls departed, viz. of such eminent persons, as had been great benefactors to mankind, and for their worthy deeds upon earth were canonized and translated into the number of the inferior gods. By these, as the chief courtiers and favourites of heaven, they addressed their prayers and supplications to the superior gods.

Now with these notions which had generally possessed mankind (how imperfect soever) God was pleased to comply so far, as in the frame of the Jewish religion (which was designed for a type of the more perfect institution of the christian religion, and a preparation for it) I say, God was pleased to comply so far with these notions, as to appoint sacrifices to be slain and offered up for the sinner; and likewise "an high priest, that once a year should enter into "the holy of holies, with the blood of sacrifices" that were offered up for the people to make expiation for them, and in virtue of that blood, "should "intercede for the people," as the apostle to the Hebrews does declare at large. And when "God "sent his Son in the fulness of time," he was pleased likewise, in the dispensation of the gospel, (that perfect institution which was never to be altered) to have so much regard to these common notions, and apprehensions of mankind, as to provide for the supply of those two great wants, which they seemed always

ways to have laboured under, and concerning which they were at so great a loss, viz. an effectual expiatory sacrifice for sins upon earth, and a powerful mediator and intercessor with God in heaven : and both these by the same person, “ JESUS CHRIST, who “ appeared in the end of the world, to take away “ sin by the sacrifice of himself ;” and in the merit and vertue of that sacrifice, “ appearing in heaven “ in the presence of God for us,” is become a perpetual advocate, and a most powerful intercessor with God in heaven for us. So that instead of the endless sacrifices of the Jewish religion, which were ineffectual to the real expiation of sin, and only types and shadows of the true expiatory sacrifice ; and instead of the bloody and inhuman sacrifices of the heathen idolatry ; the Son of God hath “ by one sacrifice for sin once offered, perfected for ever them “ that are sanctified, and obtained eternal redemption for us.” And instead of the mediation of angels, and the souls of their departed heroes, which the heathen made use of to offer up their prayers to the gods ; we have “ one mediator between God “ and men,” appointed by God himself, “ JESUS “ the Son of God,” who in our nature is ascended into heaven, “ to appear in the presence of God for “ us.” And who so fit to be our patron and advocate, as he who was our sacrifice and propitiation ?

Thus the method of our redemption, as it was by the wisdom of God admirably suited to the common apprehensions of mankind, concerning the necessity of a sacrifice to make expiation of sin, and of a mediator to intercede with God for sinners ; so was it likewise excellently fitted, not only to put an end to the Jewish sacrifices, but likewise to abolish the barbarous sacrifices and rites of the heathen idolatry, and

to cashier that infinite number of mediators and intercessors, by whom they addressed their prayers to the deity; and instead of all this, to introduce a more reasonable and spiritual worship, more agreeable to the nature and perfections of GOD, and the reason of mankind; which was one of the main and principal designs of the christian religion: and therefore to bring in any other mediators, to intercede in heaven for us (whether angels or saints) and by them to offer up our prayers to GOD, is directly contrary to the design of the christian religion.

Thirdly, it is likewise evident from the nature and reason of the thing itself, that "there is but one mediator" and intercessor in heaven, who offers up our prayers to GOD, and that there can be no more. Because under the gospel there being but one high priest, and but one sacrifice once offered for sin, and intercession for sinners being founded in the merit and virtue of the sacrifice, by which expiation for sin is made, there can be no other mediator of intercession, but he who hath made expiation of sin, by a sacrifice offered to GOD for that purpose; and this JESUS CHRIST only hath done. He is both our high priest, and our sacrifice; and therefore he only, in the merit and virtue of that sacrifice, which he offered upon earth, can intercede in heaven for us, and offer up our prayers to GOD. Others may pray to GOD for us; as our brethren upon earth do, and perhaps the angels and saints in heaven; but none of these can offer up our prayers to GOD, and procure the acceptance of them; for that can only be done in virtue of a sacrifice first offered, and by him that offered it; this being the peculiar office and qualification of a mediator or intercessor, properly so called.

It is the plain design of the author of the epistle to
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the Hebrews, to prove that CHRIST is our only mediator in heaven, in virtue of that sacrifice for sin, which he offered upon earth; and that he alone “appears in the presence of God for us,” to present our requests to him, and obtain a gracious answer to them; and he shews at large, how this was particularly typified by the Jewish high priest, who upon the great day of expiation, after the sacrifice was slain without, “entered alone into the holy of holies, “with the blood of the sacrifices,” in virtue whereof he “made intercession for the people.” Answerably to this, “JESUS the high priest of our profession, offered himself a sacrifice” for the sins of men, and in virtue of that sacrifice “is entered into “the high place not made with hands, that is, into “heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of “God for us, where he lives for ever to make intercession for us,” in virtue of that “eternal redemption, which he hath obtained for us,” by the price of his blood, as the apostle declares in several chapters of that epistle. So that this intercession being founded in the merit of a sacrifice, which he alone offered, he is of necessity, “the only mediator between “God and men.”

And for this reason it is, that the mediation and intercession of CHRIST, is so frequently in scripture mentioned together with the expiation which he made for the sins of men, or, (which is the same,) with the price which he paid for the redemption of mankind; because the one is founded in the other, and depends upon it. So we find, 1 John ii. 1, 2. “If “any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, “JESUS CHRIST the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but “also for the sins of the whole world.” And here likewise

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likewise in the text, "there is one mediator between GOD and men, the man CHRIST JESUS, who gave himself a ransom for all;" therefore "the only mediator between GOD and men;" because "he only gave himself a ransom for all" men. The efficacy and prevalency of his mediation, being founded in the merit and virtue of the ransom of his blood.

And the force of these texts, and the reasoning from them, is not to be avoided and turned off, by distinguishing between a mediator of redemption and of intercession, and by saying, that it is true, that CHRIST is the only mediator of redemption, but there may be many mediators of intercession: for if the force of his being advocate or intercessor be founded in the virtue of his ransom and propitiation (as I have plainly shewn, to the conviction of any that are not strongly prejudiced, and that will read and consider what the scripture says in this matter without prepossession,) then it is plain, that none can be a proper mediator of intercession, but he that paid the price of our redemption: so that the mediator of our redemption, and our mediator of intercession, must of necessity be one and the same person; and none can appear in the quality of "our advocate with the Father," but he only who is "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

I should now have proceeded to

The fourth thing I proposed in the handling of this argument, namely, to shew how contrary to this doctrine of the christian religion, concerning "one only mediator and intercessor in heaven for us," the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome is in this matter; namely, in their invocation of angels, and the blessed virgin, and the saints, and flying to their help and making use of their mediation and interces-

sion with God for sinners: as likewise how contrary all this is to the doctrine and practice of the christian church, for several of the first ages of it. And then I should have answered their chief pretences and excuses for these things, and shewed that this practice of theirs is not only needless (being no where commanded by God) but useless also, and unprofitable; and not only so, but very dangerous and impious, being contrary to the christian religion, and highly derogating from the virtue and merit of CHRIST's sacrifice, and from the honour of "the only mediator between God and men." But of this another time.

S E R M O N LXXII.

CHRIST JESUS, the only mediator between God and men.

1 TIM. II. 5, 6.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man CHRIST JESUS; who gave himself a ransom for all.

SERM.
LXXII.

The
second
sermon on
this text.

IN these words are four propositions; three expressed, and the fourth implied.

I. That there is one God.

II. That there is one mediator between God and men; CHRIST JESUS.

III. "That

III. That he gave himself a ransom for all.

IV. That the mediation or intercession of JESUS CHRIST, is founded in his redemption of mankind: that because "he gave himself a ransom for all men," therefore he, and he only, is qualified to intercede for all men, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for the salvation of all mankind.

The second of these I spake to the last time, and endeavoured to shew,

1. That GOD hath appointed but one mediator, or advocate, or intercessor in heaven for us; by whose mediation we are to offer up all our prayers and services to GOD.

2. That this doctrine of one mediator is most agreeable to one main end and design of the christian religion, and of our SAVIOUR'S coming into the world, which was, to destroy idolatry.

3. That from the nature and reason of the thing (viz. because intercession for sinners is founded in the merit of that sacrifice, by which expiation of sin is made) there can be no other mediator of intercession, but he who hath made expiation for sin, by a sacrifice offered to GOD for that purpose; and this JESUS CHRIST only hath done. Thus far I have gone: I proceed now to

The fourth thing which I proposed in the handling of this argument, namely, to shew how contrary to this doctrine of the christian religion, concerning one only mediator and intercessor in heaven for us, the doctrine and the practice of the church of Rome is in this matter; namely, in their invocation of angels, and the blessed virgin, and the saints and flying to their help, and making use of their mediation and intercession with GOD for sinners.

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And that I may proceed more distinctly in this argument, I shall handle it under these particular heads.

First, I shall endeavour to shew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter, is contrary to the doctrine of the christian religion, concerning one only mediator and intercessor in heaven for us.

Secondly, that it is contrary to the doctrine and practice of the christian church, for several of the first ages of it.

Thirdly, I shall endeavour to answer their chief pretences and excuses for this doctrine and practice.

Fourthly, to shew that this doctrine and practice of theirs is not only needless, being no where commanded by God, but useless also, and unprofitable.

Fifthly, and not only so, but very dangerous and impious; because contrary to the christian religion, and greatly derogating from the virtue and merit of CHRIST's sacrifice, and from the honour of "the only mediator between God and men."

First, I shall endeavour to shew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome in this matter, is contrary to the doctrine of the christian religion concerning one only mediator and intercessor in heaven for us; namely in their invocation of angels, and the blessed virgin, and the saints, and flying to their help, and making use of their mediation and intercession with God for sinners.

That JESUS CHRIST is our only mediator and intercessor with God in heaven, by whom we have access to God in any action of religious worship, and that all our prayers and services are to be offered up to God only by him, and in his name and mediation, and no other, I have plainly shewed from

scripture, and proved it by an invincible argument, taken likewise from scripture; namely, because the efficacy and prevalency of his mediation and intercession is founded in the virtue and merit of his sacrifice; and that he is therefore “the only mediator between GOD and men,” because “he only gave himself a ransom for all;” he is therefore “our only advocate with the Father,” because “he only is the propitiation for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world.”

I have shewed likewise, that the scripture excludes angels from being our mediators with GOD, from the main scope and design of the epistle to the Colossians; and much more are the saints departed excluded from this office, being inferior to the angels, not only in the dignity and excellency of their beings, but very probably in the degree of their knowledge.

In short, prayer is a proper act of religious worship, and therefore peculiar to GOD alone; and we are commanded “to worship the LORD our GOD, and to serve him only:” and no where in scripture are we directed to address our prayers and supplications and thanksgivings to any but GOD alone, and only in the name and mediation of JESUS CHRIST. Our blessed SAVIOUR himself hath taught us, to put up all our prayers to GOD our heavenly Father, Luke xi. 2. “when you pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven.” Which plainly shews, to whom all our prayers are to be address’d; and unless we can call an angel, or the blessed virgin, or a saint, our father, we can pray to none of them. And elsewhere he as plainly directs us, by whom we are to apply our selves to GOD, and in whose name and mediation we are to put up all our requests to him, John xiv. 6. “I am the way, and the truth,
“and

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“ and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father, but
“ by me.” And then it follows, ver. 13, 14. “ And
“ whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do ;
“ that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If
“ ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”
Nothing is clearer in the whole bible, than “ one
“ mediator between GOD and men, CHRIST JESUS,”
and that he is our only advocate and intercessor with
GOD in heaven for us.

Secondly, I shall endeavour to shew, that the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome, in this matter, is contrary to that of the christian church, for several of the first ages of it.

As for the ages of the apostles, it hath been already proved out of their writings. That it was not practised in the three first ages, we have the acknowledgment of cardinal Perron, and others of their learned writers ; and they give a very remarkable reason for it ; namely, because the worship and invocation of saints and angels, and addressing our prayers to GOD by them, might have seemed to have given countenance to the heathen idolatry. From whence I cannot forbear, by the way, to make these two observations. 1. That the invocation of saints and angels, and the blessed virgin, and addressing ourselves to GOD by their mediation, was not in those primitive ages esteemed a duty of the christian religion ; because, if it had, it could not have been omitted for fear of the scandal consequent upon it : and if it was not a duty then, by what authority or law, can it be made so since ? 2. That this practice is very liable to the suspicion of idolatry ; and surely every Christian cannot but think it fit, that the church of CHRIST should, like a chaste spouse, not only be free from the crime, but from all suspicion of idolatry.

And

And for the next ages after the apostles, nothing is plainer, than that both their doctrine and practice were contrary to the doctrine and practice of the present church of Rome in this matter. The most ancient fathers of the christian church do constantly define prayer, to be "an address to GOD;" and therefore it cannot be made to any but GOD only: and after the rise of Arianism, they argued for the divinity of CHRIST, against the Arians, from our praying to him; which argument were of no force, if prayers might be made to any but GOD; and this was in the beginning of the fourth age.

And we no where find any mention of those distinctions, of gods by nature, and gods by participation (as Bellarmin calls the angels and saints) or of a supreme and inferior religious worship; or of a mediator of redemption, and a mediator of intercession; which are so commonly made use by the church of Rome in this controversy.

And which is as considerable as any of the rest, the ancient fathers were generally of opinion, that the saints were not admitted to the beatific vision, till after the day of judgment; and this is acknowledged by the most learned of the church of Rome. But this very opinion takes away the foundation of praying to saints; because the church of Rome grounds it upon their reigning with CHRIST in heaven, and upon the light and knowledge which is communicated to them in the beatific vision; and if so, then they who believed the saints not yet to be admitted to this vision, could have no reason or ground to pray to them.

And lastly, the ancient church prayed for saints departed, and for the blessed virgin herself; and therefore could not pray to them, as intercessors for them

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them in heaven, for whom they themselves interced-
ed upon earth. And therefore the church of Rome,
in compliance with the change which they have made
in their doctrine, have changed the missal in that
point, and instead of praying for St. Leo (one of
their popes) as they were wont to do in their ancient
missal, in this form, Grant, O LORD, that this ob-
lation may be profitable to the soul of thy servant
Leo; the collect is now changed in the present Ro-
man missal into this form, Grant, O LORD, that by
the intercession of blessed Leo, this offering may be
profitable to us. And (as the gloss upon the canon
law observes) this change was made in their missal
upon very good reason; because anciently they pray-
ed for Leo, but now they prayed to him; which is
an ingenuous acknowledgment, that both the doc-
trine and practice of their church are plainly changed,
from what they anciently were in this matter.

What the doctrines and practices of their church of
Rome are in this matter, all the world sees, and they
themselves are so ashamed of them, that of late all
their endeavours have been, to represent them other-
wise than in truth they are, and to obtrude upon us
a new popery, which they think themselves better
able to defend than the old; which yet they have not
shewn, that they are so well able to do; and there-
fore now, instead of defending the true doctrines and
practices of their own church, they would fain mince
and disguise them, and change them into something
that comes nearer to the protestant doctrine in those
points: as if they had no way to defend their own
doctrines, but by seeming to desert them, and by
bringing them as near to ours as possibly they can.

But take them, as they have mollified them and
par'd them, to render them more plausible and tena-
ble;

ble; that which still remains of them, I mean “ the ^{S E R M.}
“ solemn invocation of saints and angels, as media- ^{LXXII.}
“ tors and intercessors with GOD in heaven for us,”
is plainly contrary both to the doctrine and practice
of the primitive ages of christianity.

As for the age of the apostles, I have already
shewn it; and the matter is as clear for several of
the next following ages, as I shall briefly shew, from
a few very plain testimonies.

In the next age to the apostles, we have an epistle
of one of the seven churches, (I mean the church of
Smyrna) in which, in vindication of themselves from
that calumny which was raised against them by the
Jews, among the heathen, “ that if they permitted
“ the Christians to have the body of the martyred
“ Polycarp, they would leave CHRIST to worship
“ Polycarp;” I say, in vindication of themselves
from this calumny, they declare themselves thus,
“ Not knowing (say they) that we can neither leave
“ CHRIST, who suffered for the salvation of the
“ world of those that are saved, nor worship any
“ other;” or, (as it is in the old Latin translation)
“ nor offer up the supplication of prayer to any
“ other person; for as for JESUS CHRIST, we adore
“ him, as being the Son of GOD; but as for the
“ martyrs, we love them, as the disciples and imi-
“ tators of the LORD.” So that they plainly ex-
clude the saints from any sort of religious worship,
of which prayer or invocation was always esteemed
a very considerable part.

Irenæus likewise tells us, (lib. 2.) that “ the
“ church doth nothing” (speaking of the miracles
which were wrought) “ by the invocation of angels,
“ nor by enchantment, nor by any other wicked
“ arts; but by prayers to the LORD who made all
“ things,

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“ things, and by calling on the name of our LORD
“ JESUS CHRIST.” Here all invocation of angels,
and by the same or greater reason, of the saints, is
excluded. And Clemens Alexandrinus delivers it as
the doctrine of the church; that “ since there is but
“ one good GOD, therefore both we and the angels
“ pray to him, both for the giving, and the conti-
“ nuance of good things.

In the next age, Origen is so full and exprefs in
this matter, that it is not possible for any protestant
to speak more positively and clearly, lib. 8. cont.
Celsus, where he does on set purpose declare and
vindicate the christian doctrine and practice in this
matter; “ We worship (says he) the one only God,
“ and his one only Son, and Word, and image, with
“ our utmost supplications and honours, bringing
“ our prayers to the God of all things, through his
“ only begotten Son:” and afterwards, “ away,
“ (says he) with Celsus his council, that says, we
“ must pray to demons (or angels) for we must pray
“ only to GOD who is above all; we must pray to
“ the only begotten and first-born of every creature,
“ and we must beseech him to offer up our prayers
“ which we make to him, to his GOD, and our GOD:”
and again (speaking of angels) “ as for the favour
“ of others (if that be to be regarded) we know,
“ that thousands of thousands stand before him, and
“ ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto
“ him; these are our brethren and friends, who when
“ they see us imitating their piety towards GOD,
“ work together to the salvation of those who call
“ upon GOD, and pray as they ought to do,” that
is, to GOD only; and (l. 5.) where Celsus urges him
with this, that the scriptures call angels gods, he tells
him, “ that the scriptures do not call the angels gods,
“ with

“ with any design to require us to worship and adore
“ them instead of GOD, who are ministring spirits,
“ and bring messages, and blessings down to us from
“ GOD ; for (says he) all supplications, and prayer,
“ and intercession, and giving of thanks, must be
“ sent up to GOD, who is above all, by the high
“ priest, who is above all angels, and is the living
“ Word and GOD.” And though angels be only
here mentioned, yet by the same reason, all other
creatures are excluded, from being the objects of our
religious worship and invocation, or, mediators of
intercession with GOD for us ; because all supplica-
tion and prayer, and intercession, and thanksgiving,
must be sent up to GOD by our high priest, who is
the living Word and GOD. “ Let us then also (as
“ he goes on) make supplication to the Word him-
“ self, and intercession, and giving of thanks and
“ prayer : but to invoke angels is not reasonable ;
“ since we do not comprehend the knowledge of
“ them, which is above us ; and if we could com-
“ prehend the knowledge of them, which is won-
“ derful and secret, this very knowledge which de-
“ clares to us their nature and office, would not al-
“ low us to presume to pray to any other, but to
“ the GOD who is LORD over all, and abundantly
“ sufficient for all, by our SAVIOUR the Son of GOD.”

Where he gives two plain reasons, why we ought to
pray only to GOD, and to offer up our prayers only
by the mediation of JESUS CHRIST, the Son of
GOD and our SAVIOUR : first, because he only is
LORD over all, and therefore the worship of prayer is
to be given to him only. And then, secondly, be-
cause we have no need of any other patron and be-
nefactor, or of any other mediator and advocate,
“ he is abundantly sufficient for all, by our SAVI-
“ OUR the Son of GOD.”

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In the same age Novatian, in his book concerning the Trinity, makes use of this argument, to prove the divinity of CHRIST; because he hears our prayers, when we call upon him. "If CHRIST, (says he) be only a man, how can he be present every where to those that call upon him? since this is not the nature of man, but of GOD, to be able to be present every where? If CHRIST be only a man, why do we in our prayers call upon him as mediator; since prayer to a man is deemed ineffectual to help or save us? if CHRIST be only man, why do we put our hope in him; since hope in man is accursed in scripture?"

In the IVth century, the apostolical constitutions, under the name of Clemens Romanus (but undoubtedly written in that age) give us a pregnant negative testimony in this matter; for though a great many of the publick prayers are there set down at large, yet they are all directed to GOD alone, and not the least intimation there of any prayer made to the angels or saints, or even to the virgin Mary; nor of their intercession or aid; which now make so great a part of the publick devotions of the church of Rome.

Athanasius, in his fourth oration against the Arians, proves the unity of the Father and the Son, from 1 Thef. iii. 11. "Now GOD himself, and our LORD JESUS CHRIST, direct our way unto you." From whence he argues thus, "One would not pray to receive any thing from the Father and the angels, or from any other creature; nor would one say, GOD and the angels give thee this; but one would pray to receive any thing from the Father and the Son, because of their unity and uniform gift; for all things that are given by the Father, are given
" by

“ by the Son, and there is nothing which the Father
 “ doth not work by the Son ;” and then concludes,
 “ that it doth not belong to any, but to GOD alone,
 “ to bless and grant deliverances.” This I take to
 be a very remarkable testimony against the church of
 Rome, who in their publick offices join the blessed
 virgin with GOD, and our SAVIOUR, in the same
 breath, and sometimes put her before her Son ; let
 Mary and her Son bless us ; as it is in the office of
 the blessed virgin ; in direct contradiction to what I
 just now cited out of Athanasius : and nothing so
 common in their mouths, as *Jesu Maria*, Jesus and
 Mary ; nothing more frequent in their most eminent
 writers, than to join them together in their doxolo-
 gies and thanksgivings, “ Glory be to GOD, and the
 “ blessed virgin, and to JESUS CHRIST,” says Gre-
 gory de Valencia. And Bellarmin himself concludes
 his disputations concerning the worship of saints ; in
 these words, “ Praise be to GOD, and to the blessed
 “ virgin mother Mary ; likewise to JESUS CHRIST,
 “ the eternal Son of the eternal Father, be praise and
 “ glory.” And in the very Roman missal itself,
 they make confession of their sins “ to GOD Almight-
 “ ty, and the blessed virgin Mary, to St. Michael
 “ the archangel, and to all the saints.” And in
 their absolution, they join together “ the passion of
 “ our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and the merits of the
 “ blessed virgin, and of all the saints, for the remis-
 “ sion of sins.” And is not this the very thing
 which Athanasius doth severely condemn ?

I have mentioned before the council of Laodicea,
 which about the middle of this century condemns
 the worship of angels, and praying to them, as down-
 right idolatry : and towards the end of this fourth
 age, and in the beginning of the fifth, when it is
 pretended

pretended that praying to saints did begin (though it was rather by way of apostrophe and rhetorical address, than of formal invocation) there are express testimonies against it of the most eminent fathers of that time. I will instance but in three, Epiphanius, St. Chrysostom, and St. Augustine.

Epiphanius, in his confutation of the heresy of the Collyridians (which he calls the heresy of the women, because they first began the worship of the virgin Mary) declares most expressly against the worship of any creature whatsoever; "for neither (says he) is Elias to be worshipped, though he is reckoned among the living," (meaning that he was taken up into heaven, body and soul) "nor John, nor any other of the saints:" and as for the virgin Mary, he particularly adds, "that if God will not have us to worship the angels, how much more would he not have us to worship her that was born of Anna?" And concludes, "let Mary be had in honour; but let the LORD be worshipped.

St. Chrysostom, in a long discourse, persuades men to address their prayers immediately to God, and not as we address ourselves to great men by their officers and favourites; and tells us "that there is no need of such intercessors with God, who is not so ready to grant our petitions, when we entreat him by others, as when we pray to him ourselves."

Lastly, St. Augustine, "because the scripture pronounces him accursed, that putteth his trust in man;" from thence he argues, that "therefore we ought not to ask of any other, but of our LORD God, either the grace to do well, or the reward of it." The contrary to which I am sure is done in several of the publick prayers used in the church of Rome. And, l. 22. de civ. Dei, he expressly

pressly tells us, that “ the names of the martyrs were
“ recited in their prayers at the altar : but they were
“ not invocated by the priest who did celebrate di-
“ vine service.” And in the third council of Car-
thage (which was in St. Augustine’s time) “ it is
“ enjoined (can. 33.) that all prayers that were
“ made at the altar, should be directed to the Father.”
Which how it is observed in the church of Rome,
we all know.

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To conclude this matter, it cannot be made ap-
pear, that there were any prayers to saints in the pub-
lick offices of the church, till towards the end of the
eighth century. For in the year 754. the invoca-
tion of saints was condemned by a council of 338
bishops at Constantinople, as is acknowledged by the
second council of Nice, which first established this
superstition, in the year 787, and this very council
was condemned seven years after, in a council at
Frankfort, and declared void, and to be no otherwise
esteemed of, than the council of Ariminum.

Thus you see, when this doctrine and practice, so
contrary to the doctrine and practice of a great many
of the first ages of the christian church, was first esta-
blished, namely, at the same time with the worship
of images, and when the first foundation of transub-
stantiation was laid ; which as they began at the same
time, so they are very fit to go together.

I should now have proceeded to the next thing
which I proposed, namely, to answer the chief pre-
tences which are made for this doctrine and practice.
But of that in the following discourse.

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CHRIST JESUS, the only mediator between God and men.

1 TIM. II. 5, 6.

For there is one GOD, and one mediator between GOD and men, the man CHRIST JESUS; who gave himself a ransom for all.

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The third
sermon on
this text.

IN the two former discourses upon this text, I have treated on the second proposition I laid down from the words; viz. "that there is but one mediator between GOD and men, the man CHRIST JESUS." In treating of this proposition, I shewed, First, that it is agreeable to scripture.

Secondly, that it is agreeable to one great end and design of the christian religion, and of our SAVIOUR's coming into the world, which was to destroy idolatry out of it.

Thirdly, that from the nature and reason of the thing, there can be but one mediator or intercessor in heaven with GOD for sinners; and that he can be no other than JESUS CHRIST.

Fourthly, I shewed how contrary to this doctrine, the doctrine and practice of the church of Rome is, in their invocation of angels, and the blessed virgin, and the saints, and making use of their mediation and intercession with GOD for sinners.

This I endeavoured to do, by shewing, 1st, How contrary this is to the doctrine of the scriptures.
2dly,

2dly, How contrary to the doctrine and practice of the church, for several of the first ages of it. And thus far I have gone. SERM.
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I proceed now in the 3d place, to answer the chief pretences and excuses which are made by those of the church of Rome, for this doctrine and practice.

As, 1. That they only say, that it is lawful to pray to angels and saints; but do not enjoin and require it. To this I answer two things.

(1.) In saying that it is lawful to pray to saints and angels (if they went no farther) they say, that which they can never make good; because prayer is an act of religious worship, and peculiar and proper to God only, and therefore cannot be given to any creature, angel, or saint. This I have proved from scripture, where our SAVIOUR commands us, "when we pray, to say, Our Father which art in heaven;" that is, to direct and address our prayers to God only. And St. Paul likewise forbids the worshipping angels by invoking of them, and making use of them as mediators between God and us, in his epistle to the Colossians; which Theodoret expressly interprets concerning the invocation of angels, and applying our selves to them, as mediators and intercessors with God in heaven for us. And the council of Laodicea declares this practice to be idolatry. Besides that the ancient fathers of the christian church, for above three hundred years, never spake of praying to any, but God only; and do expressly condemn the invocation of angels, much more of the saints, who are inferior to them; and therefore they always define prayer to be an address to God, a conversing and discoursing with God; which would be a false definition of prayer, if it were lawful to pray to any but to God only. All which considered, one may

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justly wonder at the confidence of some men, who would have it taken for granted, without any proof, that the invocation of saints and angels is lawful.

(2.) If it were true, that it is lawful to pray to angels and saints; it is not true, that the church of Rome does only declare it to be lawful, but does not require and enjoin it; as some of their late writers pretend.

With what face can this be said, when there are so many prayers to angels and saints, and especially to the blessed virgin, in the publick offices of their church, in which all are supposed to join, as much as in the prayers which are put up to God by the priest? 'Tis true indeed, the people understand neither; but they are present at both, and join in both alike; that is, as much as men can be said to join in that which they do not understand; as that church supposeth people may do, and receive great edification also, by joining with the priest, in a service which they do not understand. But how they can be edified by what they do not understand, I must confess myself as little able to understand, as they do their prayers. But whether they understand them, or not, 'tis certain that if the people have any part in the publick prayers of the church, they are bound to pray to angels and saints.

And if the creed of pope Pius IV. framed by virtue of an order of the council of Trent, be of any authority with them; one of the articles of it is, that I do firmly hold, that the saints, which reign together with CHRIST, are to be worshipped and invoked, and that they do offer up prayers to God for us. And this creed all the governors of cathedrals and superior churches, and all who hold any dignity, or benefice with cure of souls from them, are bound solemnly to make profession of, and swear

to,

to, and carefully to cause it to be held and taught, and preached by all that are under their charge; so that they are to teach the people, that the saints which reign together with CHRIST, are to be worshipped and prayed to. And therefore unless people are not bound to do that, which they are to be taught it is their duty to do, they are by virtue of this article, required to worship and pray to saints. And if the publick office of their church be the publick worship; and pope Pius his creed, the publick faith of the Romish church, no man can be either of the faith, or in the communion of that church, who does not only hold it lawful, but his duty, to worship the saints in heaven, and to pray to them, and accordingly does join in the worship of them, and prayers to them, as much as in any other part of divine service.

2. Another pretence for this doctrine and practice, is, that the saints in heaven do pray for us; and what is this but to be mediators and intercessors with God for us? And if so, why may we not pray to them, to intercede with God for us? To this I answer four things.

(1.) We do not deny that the saints in heaven pray for us that are here upon earth, because they may do so for any thing we know; but that they do so, is more than can be proved, either by clear testimony of scripture, or by any convincing argument from reason, and therefore no doctrine or practice can be safely grounded upon it.

(2.) Though it were certain, that the saints in heaven do pray for us; yet they are not mediators and intercessors properly so called: for all intercession strictly and properly so called, is in virtue of a sacrifice offered by him that intercedes; and therefore he

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only by whom expiation of sin is made upon earth, can be properly an intercessor with God in heaven; but this, no angel or saint hath done, nor can do.

And (as I have shewed in some of the former discourses) it is the plain scope of a great part of the epistle to the Hebrews to prove this very thing, that under the gospel “ we have an high priest that lives “ for ever, and appears in the presence of God for “ us,” in the virtue of “ that blood which he shed, “ and that sacrifice which he offered upon the cross “ for the expiation of sin:” and that “ by this high “ priest only we have access with freedom and confidence to the throne of grace,” and by him do offer up all our prayers and thanksgivings, and all other acts of religious worship to God: and this the apostle shews was typified in an imperfect manner, by the Jewish high priest under the law, who was but one, and none but “ he only could enter into the holy “ of holies, with the blood of the sacrifices, that “ were slain and burnt without, by which blood he “ made an atonement, and interceded for the people;” and though every priest might pray for the people, and the people for one another, which is a kind of intercession; yet that peculiar kind of intercession, which was performed by the high priest, in the holy of holies, in virtue of the sacrifice that was slain without, could not be made, but by the high priest only. By all which was typified our high priest under the gospel “ who only hath made expiation of “ sin, by the sacrifice of himself, and is entered into “ heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us, “ where he lives for ever, to make intercession for “ us,” in virtue of that blood which was shed for the expiation of sin, and which can only be presented to God, by him that shed it. And this is properly inter-

intercession, like that of the high priest under the law for the people of Israel; and this kind of intercession can be made by none in heaven for us, but only by "the high priest of our profession, JESUS the Son of GOD," and by none else can we offer up our prayers and services to GOD, and consequently we cannot address ourselves to any other, angels or saints, as mediators with GOD for us.

(3.) Supposing it certain, that the saints do pray for us; yet we may not address solemn prayer to them to pray for us, because prayer and solemn invocation is a part of that religious worship which is peculiar to GOD.

(4.) Supposing it not only certain that the saints in heaven do pray for us, but likewise that they might be proper mediators and intercessors with GOD for us; yet we ought not to pray to them, because they cannot hear us, as I shall have occasion to shew fully by and by.

3. Another of their pretences or excuses for this practice, is, that praying to saints to pray for us, is no more than what we do to good men upon earth, when we desire them to pray for us. So the late expounder of the catholic faith, namely the bishop of Meaux, tells us, that they pray to the saints in heaven, in the same order of brotherly society, with which we entreat our brethren upon earth to pray for us.

But that this is not a true representation either of their doctrine or practice in this matter, will appear by these following considerations.

(1.) That they pray to the angels and saints in heaven, with the same solemn circumstances of religious worship, that they pray to GOD himself in the same place and in the same humble posture, and in the same religious

religious offices and services, in which they pray to God ; which surely is never done by any to their brethren upon earth.

(2.) That in their prayers and thanksgivings, they join the angels and the blessed virgin and the saints together with God and CHRIST, as if (to use their own phrase) it were in the same order of brotherly society, and as if they were all equally the objects of our invocation and praise ; of which in my last discourse, I gave several plain instances ; but this also is never done to our brethren upon earth.

(3.) That in the creed of pope Pius IV. it is expressly said, that the saints which reign together with CHRIST, are to be worshipped and invoked ; but this surely they will not allow to be done to our brethren upon earth. And the council of Trent does expressly ground the worship and invocation of saints, upon their reigning with CHRIST in heaven ; and therefore this worship and invocation of saints must necessarily be something more, than according to the same order of brotherly society, with which we entreat our brethren upon earth to pray for us : otherwise the reason given by the council of their reigning with CHRIST in heaven, would be frivolous ; if the same thing may be done to our brethren upon earth.

(4.) In the publick offices of their church, they do not only pray to the saints to pray for them, but they direct their prayers and thanksgivings immediately to them, for all those blessings and benefits which they ask of God, and thank him for. Of which innumerable examples might be given out of their publick offices ; particularly in the office of the blessed virgin, they pray to the angels thus ; deliver us we beseech you by your command from all our sins.

And

And the words of the decree of the council of Trent, [*ad eorum orationes, opem, auxiliumque confugere*, to flee to their prayers, aid, and help] unless we will make them a meer tautology, must of necessity signify something more than begging of them to pray for us. And indeed those words of their aid and help, seem to be added on purpose to give countenance to those direct prayers which are made to the saints, for all spiritual and temporal blessings, and which still remain without any change in their public offices; and unless we will understand them contrary to the plain and obvious sense of those prayers, they must signify something more than praying to the saints to pray for us.

It is true indeed, that the catechism which was framed by order of the council of Trent, for the explaining of their doctrines, makes the difference between their prayers to GOD, and to the saints, to lye in this, that we say to GOD, have mercy on us, or hear our prayers; but to the saints, pray for us. But I have shewn before, that this is not the constant form of praying to saints, but that frequently they make direct addressees to them for their help and aid. And this the compilers of the catechism were sensible of, and therefore they add, although it be lawful in another manner to ask of the saints themselves, that they would have mercy on us; because they are very merciful. And is not GOD so too? And then where is the difference between their prayers to GOD, and to the saints? If it neither lye in the matter of them, nor in the form, nor in the reason of them; if we pray to them for the same thing, and in the same form, have mercy on us, and our prayers to them be grounded upon the same reason, that
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our prayers to God are, namely, because they are merciful; where then is the difference between them?

4. I will mention but one pretence more, which is, that by praying to the saints in heaven, they do not make them gods; and therefore there can be no suspicion or danger of idolatry in the case.

To this I shall answer two things;

(1.) That praying to them in all places, and at all times, and for all sorts of blessings, does suppose them to have the incommunicable perfections of the divine nature imparted to them, or inherent in them, namely his omnipotence, and omniscience, and immense presence; and to whatever being we ascribe these perfections, in so doing we make it God; for prayer to God is no otherwise an acknowledgment of his omnipotence, omniscience, and immense presence, than as we do in all places, and at all times, pray to him for all things; and so they do to the saints, and that not only with vocal but with mental prayer, which the council of Trent allows, and in so doing, necessarily supposeth them to know our hearts, directly contrary to the reason which Solomon gives, why we should put up all our prayers and supplications to God, (1 Kings viii. 39.) “for thou, even thou, only knowest the hearts of all the children of men.”

(2.) Bellarmine is so sensible of the dint of this argument, that he is forced to acknowledge the saints which reign with CHRIST in heaven to be gods by participation, (that is, a sort of inferior gods, as the heathen supposed their mediators to be) and that therefore we may fly to their aid and help, as well as to their intercession and prayers. And is this also to pray to the saints in heaven, in the same order of brotherly society, with which we entreat our brethren upon earth to pray for us? This methinks

thinks is great familiarity, to treat gods by participation, just in the same manner as we do our brethren upon earth. Certainly either Bellarmine hath raised the saints in heaven too high, when he makes them gods by participation ; or the bishop of Meaux hath sunk them too low, when he thinks they are to be treated and addressed to, in the same rank of brotherly society, with mortal men here upon earth.

One cannot but think the decree of the council of Trent to be very obscure and ambiguous, when it can admit of two of so very different explications. If the infallible judge of controversies can speak no plainer ; I think we had even best stick to the bible, and hear what GOD says in his word, and endeavour to understand it as well as we can.

I proceed now to the fourth thing which I proposed, namely, to shew that this practice of theirs, of addressing ourselves to angels and saints, and making use of their mediation, to offer up our prayers and thanksgivings to GOD is not only needless, being no where commanded by GOD ; but useless also, and unprofitable.

They are so far from pretending, that it is commanded by GOD, that several of their later writers would fain make us believe that it is not enjoined by their councils ; but only declared to be lawful, or at most, but recommended as profitable. Nor is there any example of praying to saints, either in the old or new testament : not in the old, (as they of the church of Rome confess) because the saints were not then admitted into heaven ; nor in the new, for fear of scandalizing the Jews, and of making the Gentiles think they proposed new gods, and new mediators to them instead of the old ; which are the reasons given by their own writers.

And it is needless likewise ; because the mediation of JESUS CHRIST alone is sufficient for us, and more than the intercession of millions of saints and angels. “ He ” alone “ is able to save to the utmost all those “ that come to God by him,” as the apostle to the Hebrews speaks. Hath not he made a clear and full promise to us, that “ whatever we ask in his name, “ shall be granted us ? ” And have we any reason to doubt, either of his inclination and good will, or of his power and interest to do us good ? What need then is there to sue for the favour, or to take in the assistance of any other, even of those who are thought to be most powerful, and the chief ministers and favourites in that heavenly court ? After such an assurance that my business will be effectually done there, by that great advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the righteous ; why should I apply myself to St. Peter, though he be said to keep the keys of heaven ; or to Michael the arch-angel, though he be the chief of the ministring spirits ; or to the blessed virgin herself, notwithstanding those glorious titles of the queen of heaven, and the mother of mercy, which they of the church of Rome are pleased to bestow upon her, and without her consent, and, as may reasonably be presumed, against her will ?

I will put a case, which may help to render this matter a little more plain and sensible to us, so as every man may be able to judge of it. Suppose a king should constitute his son, the great master of requests ; with this express declaration and assurance, that all petitions that were addressed to him by his son, should be graciously received and answered ; in this case, though every man might use his own discretion, at his own peril, and take what course he pleased, yet I should most certainly prefer all my pe-

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titions to the king, in the way which he had so plainly directed, and should trouble never a courtier of them all with my business; for fear the king should think, that I did either distrust his royal word, or despise his son, by my soliciting the aid and help of every little courtier, after I had put my petition into the hands of this great master of requests.

And now I will not distrust any of your understandings so far as to make the application. I will only add, that it is an eternal rule of truth, and which never fails in any case, *frustra fit per plura, quod fieri potest per pauciora*, "it is in vain to attempt that by more ways and means, which may as well and as effectually be done by one;" because this would be perfect loss of time and pains: and therefore they who would send us so far about, as to trouble all the saints and angels in heaven with our petitions, when they cannot deny but that our great mediator is alone sufficient; do seem to be to send us upon a very sleeveless errand; so that if with all their skill in fencing, they could defend this practice from being unlawful, yet this one thing is a sufficient objection in reason against it, that it is perfectly needless.

Or if we could imagine any need of this; all addresses to them must be vain and unprofitable, if they do not know our wants, and hear our prayers that are put up to them; which St. Austin thought they do not know and hear, *fatendum est* (saith he *L. De curâ pro mortuis*) *nescire quidem mortuos, quid hic agatur*; "it must be acknowledged that the dead are ignorant of what is done here." This was his opinion; but we are certain that they cannot know our wants, nor hear our prayers at all times and in all places; unless they can either be present every where, which no finite being can be; or else God be pleased

in some supernatural way to communicate to them the knowledge of our wants, and of the prayers which we put up to them; which we can never know that he does, unless he hath communicated to us, that he is pleased to do so, of which the scripture nowhere gives us the least intimation.

But because they pretend, that the scripture gives us some hints of this, I shall briefly examine what they say about this matter.

I. That the angels know our condition here below, because they are said “to rejoice at the conversion of a sinner;” and therefore the saints do likewise know our condition, because “they shall be like the angels.” But this is not said of them till after the resurrection, when we shall have no occasion to pray to them. Besides, that it may well enough be supposed, that God may reveal both to the angels and saints in heaven, the conversion of a sinner, because it may contribute to the increase of their joy and happiness: but will it hence follow, that God reveals to them all other circumstances of our condition, our dangers and temptations and troubles, our sins and our sufferings, the knowledge whereof would no ways contribute to the increase of their happiness? And yet in order to their intercession with God for us, their knowledge of these things would be most beneficial to us.

II. Because the rich man was concerned in hell for the salvation of his relations on earth, they argue that it is much more probable, that the saints in heaven are concerned for us, and are ready to pray for us, and therefore it is very credible, that some way or other, they have the knowledge of our condition and wants, though we cannot certainly tell, what that particular way is.

To which I answer,

(1.) That it is a known rule amongst all divines, that no certain argument can be drawn from the circumstances of a parable, but only from the main scope and intention of it; nor is it so likely that the wicked in hell should have any share in that, which St. Paul tells us, is the great virtue of the saints in heaven, I mean charity; and if they have it not, then no argument can be drawn from it. Some of their commentators think, that this motion of the rich man to Abraham, concerning his brethren, did not proceed from charity to them, but to himself; lest his torment and punishment should be increased by their coming to hell, by the means of the ill example which he had given them, when he was upon earth: and cardinal Cajetan thinks that he was concerned for his brethren out of pride and ambition, and because it would be for the honour of his family, to have some of them in that glory (so far above any thing in this world) which he saw Abraham and Lazarus possess'd of. This is a reason, which I confess I should not have thought on; and yet perhaps it might be likely enough to enter into the mind of a cardinal. And I cannot but observe by the way, that this petition or request, which the rich man in hell made to Abraham, is the only instance we meet with in scripture, of any thing like a prayer that was put up to any of the saints in heaven.

Well! but suppose that the rich man in hell had this charity for his brethren, and we will easily agree, that the saints in heaven have much more charity, not only for their kindred, but for all men here upon earth; let us now consider the particular way and manner which the great divines of the church of Rome (I mean the school-men, who cannot be con-

tent to be ignorant of any thing) do assign of the knowledge which the saints in heaven have of the condition and wants of men here below.

They tell us that they know all our prayers and wants in the glass of the Deity, or Trinity; which metaphor of the glass of the Deity, or Trinity, if it have any meaning, it must be this, that the saints in heaven beholding the face of GOD or the divine essence, in which the knowledge of all things is contained, they may in that glass see all things that GOD knows: but then they spoil all this fine speculation again, by telling us, that this glass does not necessarily represent to them all that knowledge which is in the divine mind; but that it is a kind of voluntary glass, in which the saints are only permitted to see so much as GOD pleaseth; but how much that is, they cannot tell us. Which amounts to no more than this; that the saints in heaven know as much of our condition here upon earth, as GOD is pleased to reveal to them: and if this be all, it is as good a reason why we should pray to good men in the East or West-Indies, to pray for us and help us, because they also know as much of our necessities and prayers, as GOD thinks fit to reveal to them.

But if the saints must have a revelation from GOD of our prayers, before that they know that we pray to them; then the shortest and surest way to both, is to pray to GOD, and not to them; or however (as Bellarmin confesseth) it were very fit to pray to GOD, before every prayer we make to the saints, that he would be pleased to reveal that prayer to them, that upon this signal and notice given them by GOD, they may betake themselves to pray to GOD for us. But unless it were very clear from scripture, that GOD had appointed this method, it is in reason such

a way

a way about, as no man would take that could help it: and it seems to me to as little purpose: for why should not a man think God as ready to grant him all his other requests, without the mediation and intercession of saints, as this one request of revealing our prayers and wants to them? And if this way be not thought so convenient, I know but one more, and that is, to pray to the saints to go to God, and beg of him, that he would be pleased to reveal to them our supplications and wants, that they may know what to pray to him for in our behalf; which is just such a wise course, as if a man should write a letter to his friend that cannot read, and in a postscript desire him, that as soon as he hath received it, he would carry it to one that can read, and entreat him to read it to him. So that which way soever we put the case, what course soever we take in this matter, it will be so far from seeming reasonable, that we shall have much ado, and must handle the business very tenderly, to hinder it from appearing very ridiculous.

Thus I have examined their chief pretences from scripture, for the countenancing this doctrine and practice, and have shewn how little, or rather nothing at all is there to be found for it; and that alone is reason enough against it, though there were nothing in scripture against it, that there is nothing in scripture for it: but I have already produced clear proof out of the new testament against it. And because they think the least shew and probability from scripture, a good argument on their side, I will offer them a probable argument out of the old testament, upon which though I will lay no absolute stress, yet I believe it would puzzle them, upon their principles, to give a clear answer to it; and it is from 2 Kings

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ii. 9. where Elijah just before he was taken up into heaven, says to Elisha, " Ask what I shall do for thee before I be taken away from thee ;" thereby intimating (as one would think) that then was the last opportunity of asking any thing of him : but if Elijah had understood the matter right (as the church of Rome does now) he should rather have directed him, to have prayed to him when he was in heaven, where he would have a more powerful interest, and be in a better capacity to do him a kindness. For the reason the church of Rome gives, why they did not pray to the saints under the old testament (namely, because they were not then admitted into heaven) will not hold in the case of Elijah, who was taken up into heaven body and soul, and consequently in as good circumstances to be prayed to, as any of the saints and martyrs that have gone to heaven since.

I should now have proceeded, in the fifth and last place, to have shewn, that this practice is not only needless and useless, but very dangerous and impious ; because contrary to the christian religion, and greatly derogating from the merit and virtue of CHRIST's sacrifice, and from the honour of " the " only mediator between GOD and men, CHRIST " JESUS." And indeed, how can we apply our selves to any other mediators and intercessors with GOD in heaven for us, without a gross and apparent contempt of the high priest of our profession, JESUS the Son of GOD ? As if we either distrusted his kindness and affection, or his power and interest in heaven, to obtain at GOD's hand all those blessings which we stand in need of. The apostle to the Hebrews tells us expressly, that " he is able to save to " the utmost all those that come to GOD by him ;" that is, who address their prayers and supplications to

to God in his name and mediation. But if we will chuse other mediators for our selves, of whom we are not sure that they can either hear or help us, we may fall short of that salvation, which the apostle tells us we are secure of by the mediation of JESUS CHRIST; "for he is able," &c.

But this hath been shewn so abundantly in the former part of this discourse, and is so clearly consequent from the whole, that I shall here conclude my discourse upon the second proposition I laid down from the words of my text, viz. that there is but one mediator between God and men, the man CHRIST JESUS.

As to the third proposition contained in the text, viz. that this one mediator, JESUS CHRIST, gave himself a ransom for all, I have treated on that subject particularly, on another * occasion.

And as to the fourth and last proposition, viz. that the mediation or intercession of JESUS CHRIST is founded in his redemption of mankind; and because he gave himself a ransom for all, therefore he and he only is qualified to intercede for all men, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered for the salvation of mankind, I judge nothing more needful to be added, to what has fallen in concerning that subject, in my handling the second proposition, in this and the two former sermons.

* A Sermon concerning the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ. Printed in the year, 1693.

Preached
on ascen-
sion-day.

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The general and effectual publication of
the gospel by the apostles.

MARK XVI. 19, 20.

So then after the LORD had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of GOD. And they went forth, and preached every where, the LORD working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

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IN these words you have these two great points of christian doctrine.

I. Our SAVIOUR's ascension into heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of GOD ; " he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of GOD."

II. The effect or consequence of his ascension and exaltation, which was the general and effectual publication of the gospel ; " they went forth, and preached every where, the LORD working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

And both these are very proper for this day ; but I shall at this time handle the latter point, namely, the effect or consequence of our SAVIOUR's ascension into heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of GOD ; " they went forth, and preached every where, the LORD working with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

And these words contain two things in them.

I. The general publication of the gospel, by the apostle; "they went forth and preached every where."

II. The reason of the great efficacy and success of it; namely, the divine and miraculous power, which accompanied the preaching of it; "the LORD wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following."

I. The general publication of the gospel by the apostles; "they went forth, and preached every where." And indeed the industry of the apostles, and the other disciples, in publishing the gospel, was almost incredible. What pains did they take? what hazards did they run? what difficulties and discouragements did they contend withal in this work? and yet their success was greater than their industry, and beyond all human expectation: as will appear, if we consider these five things.

1. The vast spreading of the gospel in so short a space.

2. The wonderful power and efficacy of it, upon the lives and manners of men.

3. The weakness and meanness of the instruments that were employed in this great work.

4. The powerful opposition that was raised against it.

5. The great discouragements to the embracing the profession of it. I shall speak briefly to each of these.

1. The vast spreading of the gospel in so short a space. This is represented, Rev. xiv. 6. by "an angel flying through the midst of heaven, and preaching the everlasting gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." No soon-

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er was the doctrine of the christian religion published, and made known to the world, but it was readily embraced by great numbers, almost in all places where it came. And indeed so it was foretold, in the prophecies of the old testament, Gen. xlix. 10. "That
" when Shiloh (that is the Messias) should come, to
" him should the gathering of the people be:" and
Isa. ii. 2. "That in the last days the mountain of
" the LORD's house should be established in the
" top of the mountains, and be exalted above the
" hills, and that all nations should flow unto it." Isa. lx. 8. the prophet speaking of mens ready submission to the gospel, and the great number of those that should come in upon the preaching of it, they are said, "to fly as a cloud, and as the doves to the
" windows."

So quick and strange a progress did this new doctrine and religion make in the world, that in the space of about 30 years after our SAVIOUR's death, it was not only diffused through the greatest part of the Roman empire, but had reached as far as Parthia and India. In which we see our SAVIOUR's prediction fully verified, that before the destruction of Jerusalem, the gospel should be preached in all the world, Matt. xxiv. 14. "This gospel of the
" kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a
" witness unto all nations, and then shall the end
" come." But this is not all: men were not only brought in to the profession of the gospel; but,

2. This doctrine had likewise a wonderful power and efficacy upon the lives and manners of men. The generality of those that entertained the gospel, were obedient to it in word and deed, as the apostle tells us, concerning the Gentiles that were converted to christianity, Rom. xv. 18. Upon the change of
their

their religion, followed also the change of their manners, and of their former course of life. They that took upon them the profession of christianity, “ did “ thenceforth not walk as other Gentiles did, in the “ lusts of the flesh, and according to the vicious course “ of the world ; but did put off concerning their former conversation, the old man, which was corrupt, “ according to the deceitful lusts ; and were renewed in “ the spirit of their mind, and did put on the new man, “ which after God was created in righteousness and true “ holiness.” So strange an effect had the gospel upon the lives of the generality of the professors of it, that I remember Tertullian, in his apology to the Roman emperor and senate, challengeth them to instance in any one, that bore the title of Christian, that was condemned as a thief, or a murderer, or a sacrilegious person, or that was guilty of any of those gross enormities, for which so many pagans were every day made examples of publick justice, and punish’d and executed among them.

And this certainly was a very admirable and happy effect, which the gospel had upon men, to work so great and sudden a change in the lives of those who entertained this doctrine, to take them quite off from those vicious practices, which they had been brought up in, and accustomed to ; to change their spirits, and the temper of their minds ; and of lewd and dishonest, to make them sober and just, and “ holy in all “ manner of conversation ;” of proud and fierce, contentious and passionate, malicious and revengeful to make them humble and meek, kind and tender-hearted, peaceable and charitable.

And that the primitive Christians were generally good men, and of virtuous lives, is credible, because their religion did teach and oblige them to be such ;
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which though it be not effectual now, to make all the professors of it such, as it requires they should be; yet it was a very forcible argument then, in the circumstances in which the primitive Christians were: for christianity was a hated and persecuted profession: no man could then have any inducement to embrace it, unless he were resolved to practise it, and live according to the rules of it; for it offered men no rewards and advantages in this world; but on the contrary threatned men with the greatest temporal inconveniencies and sufferings, and it promised no happiness to men in the other world upon any other terms, than of "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," and of "living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."

And besides this consideration, we have the best testimony in the world of their unblameable lives; viz. the testimony of their profess'd enemies, who did not persecute them for any personal crimes, which they charged particular persons withal, but only for their religion, acknowledging them otherwise to be very innocent and good people. Particularly Pliny, in his letter to Trajan the emperor (who had given him in charge, to make particular enquiry concerning the Christians) gives this honourable report of them, That there was no fault to be found in them, besides their obstinate refusal to sacrifice to the gods; that at their religious meetings it was an essential part of their worship to oblige themselves by a solemn sacrament, against murder, and theft, and adultery, and all manner of wickedness and vice. No christian historian could have given a better character of them, than this heathen writer does. But,

3. The success of the gospel will appear yet more strange, if we consider the weakness and meanness of

of the instruments that were employed in this great work. A company of plain and illiterate men, most of them destitute of the advantages of education, went forth upon this great design, weak and unarmed, unassisted by any worldly interest, having no secular force and power on their side, to give countenance and authority to them; and this not only at their first setting out, but they remained under these disadvantages for three ages together.

The first publishers of the christian religion offered violence to no man, did not go about to compel any by force to entertain the doctrine which they preached, and to lift themselves of their number; they were not attended with legions of armed men, to dispose men for the reception of their doctrine, by plunder and free-quarter, by violence and tortures; this modern method of conversion was not then thought of; nor did they go about to tempt and allure men to their way, by the promises of temporal rewards, and by the hopes of riches and honours; nor did they use any artificial insinuations of wit and eloquence, to gain upon the minds of men, and steal their doctrines into them; but delivered themselves with the greatest plainness and simplicity; and without any studied ornaments of speech, or fine arts of persuasion, declared plainly to them, the doctrine and miracles, the life and death, and resurrection of JESUS CHRIST, promising life and immortality to them that did believe and obey his doctrine, and threatening eternal woe and misery in another world, to the despisers of it.

And yet these contemptible instruments, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, did their work effectually, and, by the power of God going along with them, gained numbers every day to their religion,
and

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and in a short space, “drew the world after them.” Nor did they only win over the common people, but also several persons considerable for their dignity, and eminent for their learning, who afterwards became zealous assertors of christianity, and were not ashamed to be instructed in the saving knowledge of the gospel, by such mean and unlearned persons as the apostles were; for they saw something in them more divine, and which carried with it a greater power and persuasion, than human learning and eloquence.

4. We will consider the mighty opposition that was raised against the gospel. At its first appearance it could not be otherwise, but that it must meet with a great deal of difficulty and opposition, from the lusts and vices of men, which it did so plainly and so severely declare against, and likewise from the prejudices of men that had been brought up in a contrary religion; no prejudice being so strong, as that which is founded in education; and of all the prejudices of education, none so obstinate and so hard to be removed, as those about religion, yea, though they be never so absurd and unreasonable: “hath a nation changed their gods, which yet are no gods?” Men are very hardly brought off from the religion which they have been brought up in, how little ground and reason soever there be for it; the being trained up in it, and having a reverence for it implanted in them in their tender years supplies all other defects.

Had men been free and indifferent in religion, when christianity first appeared in the world, and had they not had their minds prepossessed with other apprehensions of God and religion, and been inured to rites and superstitions of a quite different nature

from

from the christian religion ; or had they at that time been weary of the superstitions of their idolatrous worship, and been enquiring after a better way of religion ; then indeed the christian religion had appeared with great advantage, and would in all probability have been entertained with a readiness of mind proportionable to the reasonableness of it. But this was not the case : when the doctrine of the gospel was first publish'd in the world, the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles, were violently prejudiced against it, and fix'd in their several religions.

The Jews indeed in former times had been very prone to relinquish the worship of the true God, and to fall into the heathen idolatry : but after God had punish'd them severely for that sin, by a long captivity, they continued ever after, very strict and firm to the worship of the true God ; and never were they more tenacious of their religion and law, than at that very time when our SAVIOUR appeared in the world : and though he was foretold in their law, and most particularly described, in the authentic books of their religion, the prophets of the old testament ; yet by reason of certain groundless traditions, which they had received from the interpreters of their law, that their Messias was to be a great temporal prince, they conceived an invincible prejudice against our SAVIOUR, upon account of the mean circumstances in which he appeared ; and upon this prejudice they rejected him, and put him to death, and persecuted his followers ; and though their religion was much nearer to the Christian, than any of the heathen idolatries ; yet upon this account, of our SAVIOUR's mean appearance, they were much more averse to the entertainment of it, than the grossest idolaters among the nations.

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Not but that their prejudice also was very great; the common people being strongly addicted to the idolatry and superstitions of their several countries; and the wiser, and more learned (whom they call'd philosophers) were so puffed up, with a conceit of their own knowledge and eloquence, that they despised the rudeness and simplicity of the apostles, and look'd upon their doctrine of a crucified SAVIOUR, as ridiculous, and the story of his resurrection from the dead as absurd and impossible. So St. Paul tells us, "that the cross of CHRIST was to the Jews a "stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

But besides the opposition which the gospel met withal, from the lusts and prejudices of men, the powers of the world did likewise strongly combine against it. Among the Jews, the chief priests and rulers did, with all their force and malice, endeavour to stifle it in the birth, and to suppress it in it's first rise; and several of the Roman emperors, who were then the great governors of the world, engaged all their authority, and their whole strength, for the extirpation of it, and raised such a storm of persecution against it, as swept away greater numbers of mankind, than any famine or plague or war that ever was in the Roman empire: and yet this religion bore up against all this opposition, and made it's way through all the resistance, that the lusts and prejudices of men, armed with the power and authority of the whole world, could make against it. And this brings me to the

5. And last consideration I mentioned, the great discouragement that was given to the entrance of this religion.

There was nothing left to invite and engage men to it, but the consideration of another world; for all

all the evils of this world threatned every one that took the profession of christianity upon him. Whoever was known to be a Christian was liable to reproach and ruin, to cruel mockings and scourgings, to banishment, or imprisonment and confiscation of estate; but these were slight and tolerable evils, in comparison of others that were commonly inflicted upon them; they were condemned to the mines, and to the lions, and all imaginable cruelties were exercised upon them; the most exquisite torments that could be devised, and death in all it's fearful shapes was presented to them, to deter men from embracing this religion, and to tempt them to quit it: and yet they persisted in the profession of their religion, and for the sake of it, did not only "take joyfully the spoiling of their goods," but the most barbarous usage of their persons, and demeaned themselves not only with patience and courage, but in exultation and triumph, under those tortures which no man can hear or read of, without horror: and they did not only bear up this manfully, for one brunt; but when these violent persecutions were renewed and repeated upon them, christianity supported itself under all these daunting discouragements for almost three hundred years, and held out, till the very malice of their persecutors was out of breath, and their cruelty had tired itself.

Nay it did not only support itself, under all these oppositions, but grew and prospered, and the blood of martyrs became the seed of the church, and Christians sprang up faster, than any persecution could mow them down: for men by degrees became curious to enquire into the cause of such sufferings, and the reason of so much constancy and patience under them; and upon enquiry were satisfied, and became

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Christians themselves; and many times their very persecutors were ready to sacrifice their lives the next day, for that very cause for which but the day before they had put others to death.

And it cannot here be reasonably objected, that Christians yielded up themselves to all these sufferings, upon the same account that some brave spirits among the heathen laid down their lives for their country; namely, out of a desire of fame, and to perpetuate their names in after-ages; this, I say, cannot reasonably be said in this case; because these sufferers were not the great and ambitious spirits, the flower and select part of mankind, but the common people, and many of them of the tenderer sex and age, who have usually a greater sense of pain than of glory; and yet so were they animated by their religion, and transported beyond themselves, as not only to submit, but many times to offer themselves to those sufferings, by declaring themselves to be Christians, when no man accused them, and when they knew they should die, for making that profession; so that it is harder to justify their forwardness to suffer, than the sincerity of their sufferings. Besides, that nothing could be more foolish, and unreasonable, than for men to hope to get a name by suffering in a croud, and to be particularly remembered to posterity, when they died in such multitudes, that no man knew the names of the greatest part of the sufferers.

You see then how strongly the gospel prevailed, how soon this new religion over-ran the world, how suddenly it subdued the spirits, and changed the manners of men; and by what mean and despicable instruments, to all human appearance, this great work was done; and how in despite of all opposi-

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tion and discouragements, it was carried on. Can any one of the false religions of the world pretend to have been propagated and establish'd in such a manner, merely by their own force, and the evidence and power of truth upon the minds of men; and to have born up and sustained themselves so long under such fierce assaults, as christianity hath done?

As for the religion of Mahomet, it is famously known to have been planted by force at first, and to have been maintained in the world, by the same violent means. So that great impostor openly declares, that he came not to plant his religion by miracles, but by the sword.

And as for the idolatries of the heathen, they came in upon the world by insensible degrees, and did not oppose the corruptions of men, but grew out of them; and being suited to the vicious temper and disposition of mankind, they easily gained upon their ignorance and superstition, by custom and example. They were just such a corruption of natural religion, in such times of darkness and ignorance, and by such insensible steps, as there hath been since, of the christian religion in some parts of the world, which we all know. But no sooner did the light of the gospel shine out upon the world, but the idolatry and superstition of the heathen fell before it, like "Dagon before the ark of God;" and though it had the power of the world, and countenance of authority on it's side, yet it was not able to maintain it's ground; and no sooner was that prop taken away, which was the only support of it, but it presently sunk and vanish'd; it was not driven out of the world by violence and persecution, but upon the breaking in of so great a light, it silently withdrew, as being ashamed of itself: and when afterwards the emperor Julian

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endeavoured to retrieve it, by his wit and authority, and used all imaginable arts and stratagems, to suppress and extinguish christianity, he was able to effect neither; for the christian religion kept it's ground, and paganism, after it had made a little blaze, died with him.

Now to what cause shall we ascribe this wonderful success, and prevalency of the gospel in the world? There can but these two be imagined; the excellency of the christian religion, and the power and presence of the divine Spirit accompanying it.

1. The excellency of the christian religion, which both in respect of the goodness of it's precepts, and the assurance of it's rewards, hath plainly the advantage of any religion, that ever yet appeared in the world. And this is a great advantage indeed: but by this alone it could never have been able to have broken through all that mighty opposition and resistance, which was made against it; and therefore that it might be able to encounter this with success.

2. God was pleased to accompany the first preaching of it, with a mighty and sensible presence and power of his spirit. And this brings me to the

Second part of the text, the reason of the wonderful efficacy and success, which the apostles had, in the preaching of the gospel; "the LORD wrought with them, and confirmed the word with signs following." Which words express to us that miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, which accompanied the first preaching of the gospel; by which I do not intend to exclude the inward operation of God's holy Spirit upon the minds of men, secretly moving and inclining those to whom the gospel was preached, to embrace and entertain it; which the scripture elsewhere speaks frequently of, and may possibly be

intended

intended in the first of these expressions, "the LORD
"working with them;" and the latter may only be
meant of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, with re-
gard to which, GOD is said to "confirm the word
"with signs following," or accompanying it. But
I rather think they are both intended to express the
same thing, and that the latter is only added by way
of explication of the former, to shew more particu-
larly, how the LORD wrought with them; namely,
by giving confirmation to their doctrine by those mi-
raculous gifts and powers of the Spirit, which they
were endowed withal; "the LORD working with
"them, and confirming the word with signs follow-
"ing;" that is, with those miracles, which accom-
panied the first preaching of the gospel. For these
words do plainly refer to the promise of the Spirit at
the 17th verse; "and these signs shall follow them
"that believe;" which is the reason why they are
here called signs following; that is, miracles which
accompanied the word that was preached.

And that this is the full meaning of this text, will
appear by comparing it with one or two more, Rom.
xv. 18, 19. where St. Paul speaking of "the things
"which CHRIST had wrought by him, to make the
"Gentiles obedient to the gospel, he says, they were
"done through mighty signs and wonders, by the
"power of the Spirit of GOD;" which is the same
with that which is said here in the text, of "the
"LORD's working with the apostles, and confirming
"the word with signs following." So likewise,
Heb. ii. 3, 4. the apostle there tells us, that "the
"gospel which was first spoken by the LORD, was
"confirmed by them that heard him, GOD also bear-
"ing them witness, both with signs and wonders,
"and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy
"Ghost."

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“ Ghost.” So that the great confirmation, which is said here to be given to the gospel, was by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, which were poured forth upon the apostles and primitive Christians.

In speaking of which, I shall briefly do these two things.

I. Give an account of the nature of these gifts, and of the use and end to which they served : and then shew in the

II. Place, how the gospel was confirmed by them.

I. For the nature of these gifts, and the use and end to which they were designed.

They are those miraculous powers which by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost, the apostles were endowed withal, to qualify them to publish the gospel with more speed and success. Such was the gift of speaking divers languages, and the gift of interpreting things spoken in divers languages ; (and these two gifts were not necessarily united in the same person, for the apostle tells us, that some had the one, and some the other ;) the gift of prophecy and, foretelling things to come, which was always a sign of a person divinely inspired ; the miraculous powers of healing diseases, of raising the dead, and of casting out devils ; a power of inflicting corporal diseases, and punishments, upon scandalous and obstinate Christians, who would not submit to the apostles authority and government ; which is in scripture called ; “ a delivering up to Satan, for “ the destruction,” or tormenting “ of the body, “ that the soul may be saved ;” nay, in some cases, this power extended to the inflicting of death itself, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira.

Not that all these miraculous powers were given to every one of the apostles, or that they could exer-

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cise them at all times ; some were bestowed upon one, and some upon another, according to God's good pleasure, and as was most expedient for the use and benefit of the church, and most subservient to those ends for which God gave them ; only we find that all the apostles had the gift of tongues ; and that the power of " casting out devils, in the name of " CHRIST," was common to every Christian, and continued in the church for a long time after the other gifts were ceased ; as Tertul. Arnob. and Min. Felix do testify, even of their own times.

But II. I shall briefly shew how the gospel was confirmed by these miraculous gifts.

Now besides the particular uses and ends of those miraculous gifts (as the gift of tongues, did evidently serve for the more speedy planting and propagating of the christian religion in the world ; and the power of inflicting corporal punishments, in a miraculous manner, upon scandalous and disobedient Christians, did maintain the power and authority of the apostles, and was instead of an ordinary magistratical power, which Christians were destitute of, whilst the Roman empire continued heathen ;) I say, besides the particular ends and uses of all these miraculous gifts, they did all in general, as they were miracles, serve for the confirmation of the gospel.

The apostles delivered the doctrine of CHRIST, and were witnesses of his resurrection from the dead, as the great miracle, whereby his doctrine was confirmed ; now there was all the reason in the world to believe them, to whom God was pleased to give such a testimony from heaven : for who could make any doubt of the truth of their testimony, concerning the resurrection of CHRIST who were enabled to raise " others from the dead," and by many other

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wonderful things which they did, gave such clear testimony, that "God was with them?"

Never had any religion fewer worldly advantages to recommend it, and so little temporal countenance and assistance to carry it on; but what it wanted from men, it had from God; for "he gave witness to it with signs" "and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the" "holy Ghost." God seems on purpose to have stripped it of all secular advantages, that the christian religion might be perfectly free from all suspicion of worldly interest and design, and that it might not owe it's establishment in the world, to the wisdom and contrivance of men, but to the arm and power of God.

The inferences I shall at present make from this discourse shall be these.

I. To give us satisfaction of the truth and divinity of the doctrine of the christian religion, which hath had so eminent a confirmation given to it from heaven, and did at it's first setting out so strangely prevail in the world, against all human probability; "not" "by might, nor by power; but by the Spirit of the" "LORD."

No man can well suppose a religion in circumstances of greater disadvantage, and upon all human accounts, more unlikely to sustain and bear up itself than the christian religion was. The first appearance of it was so mean, and it's beginnings so small, that no man but would have thought it would presently have come to nothing; and no other account can be given of the strange success and prevalency of it, but that "it was of God," and therefore "it could not" "be overthrown."

II. This discourse may likewise satisfy us of the reason why this miraculous power, which accompanied the gospel at first, is now ceased; because there

is not the like reason and necessity for it, which there was at first.

It was highly necessary then, to introduce the christian religion into the world, and to be a sensible evidence to men of the divinity of that new doctrine, which was preached to them, but now that the gospel is generally entertained, there is not the same reason, why this miraculous power should still be continued. *Acquisito fine, cessant media ad finem*, when the end is once obtained, the means cease; and the wise God, who is never wanting in what is necessary, does not use to be lavish in that which is superfluous. Now that the christian religion hath got firm footing in the world; God leaves it to be propagated and advanced by it's own rational force upon the minds of men: now that the prejudices of education in a contrary religion are removed, and the powers of the world are reconciled to christianity; there is no need of such violent and extraordinary means for the continuance of it: now that it stands upon equal advantages with other religions: God hath left it to be carried on, in more humane and ordinary ways, and such as are more level and accommodate to the nature of man.

That miracles are long since ceased, is acknowledged by the fathers, who lived an age or two after the ceasing of them; particularly by St. Chrysostom, who gives the same reason for it, which I have just now assigned. But the church of Rome would still bear us in hand, that this miraculous power does still continue in their church, and according to Bellarmine, must always continue; because he makes it an inseparable property and mark of the true church.

But we pretend to no such power, nor have we any reason so to do; because all the doctrines of our religion,

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religion, are the ancient doctrines of christianity, delivered by our SAVIOUR, and by his apostles published to the world; and these are sufficiently confirmed already, by the miracles which our SAVIOUR and his apostles wrought in the primitive times of christianity. But the church of Rome hath great occasion and need of new miracles, to confirm their new doctrines; and therefore as they have reason, they usually apply them to the confirmation of their new doctrines; some to confirm purgatory, and to give countenance to indulgences; others to encourage the worship of the blessed virgin, and the saints; others to confirm that which all the miracles in the world are not sufficient to confirm, I mean the doctrine of transubstantiation; which, because it overthrows the certainty of sense, is in the nature of it peculiarly incapable of being confirmed by a miracle.

III. And lastly, the consideration of what has been said does justly upbraid us that this religion, which was so powerful at first, and hath such characters of divinity upon it, coming down to us confirmed by so many miracles, should yet have so little effect upon most of us who call ourselves Christians.

We have all the advantages of the christian religion, having been educated and brought up in it; and yet it hath less effect upon us, than it had upon those whose minds were prejudiced, and whose manners were depraved, by the principles of a false religion: for those who were reduced from paganism to christianity, did on the sudden become better men, and were more holy and virtuous in their lives; than the greatest part of us, who have been instructed and trained up all our lives in the doctrine of christianity.

The true reason of which is, that many of us are Christians, upon the same account, that they were at

first

first heathens; because it was the religion of their country, and they were born and bred up in it: but christianity was the religion of their choice, and there were no motives to persuade them to the profession of that religion, but what were as powerful to oblige them to the practice of it. Let us also be Christians, not only by custom, but by choice; and then we shall live according to our religion.

He that takes up a religion, for any other reason, than to obey and practise it, does not chuse a religion, but only counterfeits the choice of it. We have beyond comparison the best and most reasonable religion in the world, a religion that hath the greatest evidence of it's truth, that contains the best precepts, and gives men the greatest assurance of a future happiness, and directs them to the surest way of attaining it: now the better our religion is, the worse are we, if we be not made good by it. The philosophy of the heathen, made some virtuous: and there were many eminent saints under the imperfection of the jewish institution. What degrees then of holiness and virtue may be expected from us, upon whom the glorious light of the gospel shineth so brightly?

I will conclude all, with the words of the apostle, Heb. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4. "Therefore we ought to give
"the more earnest heed to the things which we have
"heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.
"For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and
"every transgression and disobedience received a just
"recompence of reward: how shall we escape; if
"we neglect so great salvation, which at the first
"began to be spoken by the LORD, and was con-
"firmed unto us by them that heard him; God also
"bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders,
"and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy
"Ghost, according to his own will?"

SER-

Preached
on the
feast of St.
Michael.

S E R M O N LXXV.

The nature, office, and employment of
good angels.

HEB. I. 14.

*Are they not all ministring spirits sent forth to minister
for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*

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THIS is spoken of good angels, whose existence, as well as that of evil spirits, the scriptures both of the old and new testament, do every where take for granted, no less than they do the being of God, and the immortality of the soul. And well they may, since they are all founded upon the general consent of all ages, derived down to us from the first spring and original of mankind; of which general consent and tradition, it is one of the hardest things in the world to assign any good reason, if the things themselves were not true. Therefore I shall not go about to force my way into this argument concerning the existence of spirits, and beings distinct from matter, by dint of dispute (which perhaps would neither be so proper, nor so profitable for this assembly) but shall take the thing as I find it received by a general consent of mankind. And so the books of divine revelation do: nor was there reason to proceed in any other method, than to suppose these things, and take them for granted, as generally assented to by mankind, without either asserting them for new discoveries, or attempting to prove

prove what was so universally believed. The scriptures indeed have more particularly declared the nature of these spirits, as also their order and employment; as in the words which I have read to you, where the office and employment of good angels is more particularly discovered; "are they not all" (says the text) "ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

The author of this epistle to the Hebrews having had occasion, in comparing the two dispensations of the law and the gospel, to speak of the angels, by whose ministry the law was given, did not think fit to entertain those to whom he wrote, with any nice and curious speculations (for school divinity was not then in fashion) about the nature and order of angels; but tells us, what it concerns us more to know, namely, what their office and employment is in regard to us. Concerning their nature, he only tells us, that they are spirits; as to their office and employment, he says in general, that they are ministring spirits, that is, that they stand before God to attend upon him, ready to receive his commands, and to execute his pleasure: more particularly, that they are upon occasion appointed and sent forth by God to minister on the behalf, and to do good offices "for them that shall be heirs of salvation." Which last words are a description of pious and good men, such as had sincerely embraced the christian religion, and were thereby become the children of God, and heirs of eternal salvation. So that these words are a brief summary of the doctrine of good angels, and of what the scripture has thought fit to reveal to us concerning them: which may be referred to these three heads.

First, their nature; "are they not spirits?"

Secondly,

Secondly, their general office and employment; “are they not ministring spirits?”

Thirdly, their special office and employment, in regard to good men, “they are sent forth to minister for them” (that is, in their behalf, and for their benefit) “who shall be heirs of salvation.”

And this is as much as is necessary for us to know concerning them; and all this is very agreeable to the general apprehension of mankind; but the scripture hath very much cleared and confirmed to us, that which was more obscure and less certain before. I shall briefly explain and illustrate these three heads, and then draw some useful inferences from the whole.

First, for their nature; they are spirits. This is universally agreed by all that acknowledge such an order of beings, that they are spirits: but whether they are pure spirits, divested of matter, and all kind of corporeal vehicle (as the philosophers term it) hath been a great controversy, but I think of no great moment and consequence. Not only the ancient philosophers, but some of the ancient christian fathers, did believe angels to be clothed with some kind of bodies, consisting of the purest and finest matter; which they call ætherial. And this opinion seems to be grounded upon a pious belief, that it is the peculiar excellency and prerogative of the divine nature, to be a pure and simple spirit, wholly separate from matter: but the more current opinion of the christian church (especially of latter times) hath been, that angels are mere and pure spirits, without any thing that is material and corporeal belonging to them; but yet so, that they have a power to assume thin and airy bodies, and can when they please appear in human shape, as they are frequently in scripture said to have done. And this seems most agreeable

able to the scripture account of them ; though I think it is no necessary article of faith, either to believe that they are clothed with some kind of bodies, or that they are wholly divested of matter.

But however this be, they are described in scripture to be endowed with great excellencies and perfections ; they are said “ to excel in strength,” Psal. ciii. 20. and in knowledge and wisdom. Hence are those expressions of “ being as an angel of God, to “ discern good and bad,” 2 Sam. xiv. 17. “ Wise, “ according to the wisdom of an angel,” ver. 20. To be of great activity and swiftness in their motions ; hence it is that they are represented in scripture, as “ full of wings :” and to excel in purity and holiness ; hence is that title given them in scripture, of “ the holy angels.” This is the sum of what the scripture hath in several places delivered to us, concerning the nature and properties of good angels ; and beyond this, all our knowledge of them is mere conjecture and uncertainty ; and the nice speculations concerning them, idle and wanton curiosities. Indeed the scripture gives sufficient intimation of several ranks and orders among them, by calling Michael an archangel, and chief prince, and by distinguishing them by the names of “ principalities, and powers, and thrones, and dominions :” but what the difference of these names import, though some have attempted to explain, yet I do not find that they have discovered any thing to us, besides their own ignorance and arrogance, in pretending to be “ wise above what is written ; intruding into those things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds ;” as the apostle censures some in his time.

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Secondly,

The nature, office, and

Secondly, we **have** here their general office and employment ; “ they **are** ministring spirits ; ” they are (as I may say) domestick servants, and constant attendants upon that great and glorious king, “ whose throne is in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all ; they stand continually before him, “ to behold his face,” expecting his commands, and in a constant readiness to do his will. For though the omnipotence of God, and his perfect power of acting be such, that he can do all things immediately by himself, “ whatever he pleaseth in heaven and “ in earth ; ” can govern the world, and steer the affairs of it, and turn them which way he thinks best, by the least nod and beck of his will, without any instruments or ministers of his pleasure ; yet his wisdom and goodness has thought fit to honour his creatures, especially this higher and more perfect rank of beings, with his commands, and to make them, according to their several degrees and capacities, the ordinary ministers of his affairs, in the rule and government of this inferior world ; and this not for his own ease (for to infinite power nothing can be difficult or troublesome) but for their happiness ; and he therefore employs them in his work and service, that they may be capable of his favour and rewards.

And that the angels of God are the great ministers of his providence here in the world, hath not only been the constant tradition of all ages ; but is very frequently and plainly asserted in scripture. In the old testament we often read that God employed his angels to be the messengers of his will and pleasure to men : and to carry good tidings and comfortable news to them upon several occasions : as to Abraham, to foretel the miraculous birth of his son Isaac ;

Isaac; and afterwards to rescue him from being sacrificed: to Jacob, when he was so afraid of his brother Esau: to Manoah and his wife, to foretel the birth of Sampson, the great deliverer of Israel from the Philistines: and upon that great occasion of bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt, and conducting them through the wilderness, he sent a great and mighty angel (called "the angel of his presence") to go before them, and guide them in their way: and the apostle tells us, that "the law was delivered to them upon mount Sinai by the disposition of angels."

On the other hand, God frequently made them the messengers of his wrath, and instruments of his vengeance. Thus he sent them to foretel, and to execute that terrible destruction upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And he sent a destroying angel to brandish his sword in a visible manner over Jerusalem, and to smite them with the pestilence, for David's sin in numbering the people. And by the ministry of an angel he slew in the camp of the Assyrians in one night, an hundred and eighty five thousand. And Acts xii. 23. it is said, that "the angel of the LORD smote Herod," for receiving the blasphemous acclamations of the people.

Nay, the angels shall be the instruments and executioners of God's vengeance upon the wicked, at the judgment of the great day. So the judge himself tells us, Matth. xiii. 49, 50. "So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

And that particular angels do preside over empires and kingdoms, and sway the weighty affairs of them;

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and by a secret and invisible hand manage and bring about great changes and revolutions, both Jews and Christians have collected with great probability and consent from Daniel x. where there is mention made of the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstanding the angel that was sent to Daniel, and of Michael a chief prince assisting him. And of this ministry of angels, in the government of kingdoms, Clemens Alexandrinus speaks, as of a thing out of all controversy. I proceed to the

Third thing, which I principally intended, and seems to be chiefly designed in the text: and this is the special office and employment of good angels, in regard to good men; and for this the apostle expressly tells us, that "they are sent forth to minister for them" (that is, in their behalf, and for their benefit) "who shall be heirs of salvation." In which words there are three things very considerable for our instruction and comfort.

1. Their particular designation and appointment for this employment, express'd in these words, "sent forth," ἀποσελλόμενοι, as if they were particularly commissioned and appointed by God for this very end. God himself doth superintend all affairs, and by his particular designation and command, the angels do fulfil his word, and execute the pleasure of his good will towards us. Hence it is so frequently said in scripture, that God sent his angel to such or such a person, for such or such purposes.

2. You have here the general end of their employment; for good men; they are sent forth on our behalf, and for our benefit; to take care of us and protect us, to succour and comfort, to direct and assist, to rescue and deliver us.

3. Here

3. Here is the more special end of their employment in regard to good men, intended in those words, "for them who shall be heirs of salvation;" hereby signifying, that the angels are employed about good men, with regard more particularly to their eternal happiness, and for the conducting and furthering of the great affair of their everlasting salvation. This certainly is our greatest concernment; and therefore they have a more particular charge and care of us in regard to this.

It was a common opinion among the Heathen, and a constant and firmly believed tradition among the Jews, (the Sadducees only excepted, who did not believe there were angels or spirits) that every man (at least every good man) had a guardian angel appointed him by God, to take a special care of him and his concernments, both spiritual and temporal; to guard him from dangers, to direct and prosper him in his way, and to comfort and deliver him in his affliction and distress. And therefore we find among the Jewish prayers, used by them at this day, a particular prayer, wherein they request of God, to command the angels who have the care of human affairs, to help and assist, to preserve and deliver them. But especially they believed good angels, in their attendance upon good men, to be very active and diligent to incline them to good, and to encourage them therein, by holy emotions and suggestions, by secret comfort and assistances, and by opposing evil spirits, and defending us against their assaults, and by countermining their malicious designs and attempts upon us. And accordingly we find that the best men among the Jews did steadfastly believe, if not the particular guardianship of angels, and that every good man had his particular angel assigned

signed to him by GOD, to take the particular charge of him ; yet the common ministry of good angels, about good men ; and their more especial care of particular persons, upon particular and great occasions, to protect them from temporal evils, and to promote and prosper their temporal affairs and concerns.

Of this Abraham, "the father of the faithful," and "the friend of GOD," was most firmly persuaded (at least in matters of great moment and concernment to us) as appears by his discourse with his steward, when he was sending him to treat of a match for his son, Gen. xxiv. 40. "The LORD (says he) before "whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and "prosper thyway." And David the "man after GOD's "own heart," does more than once declare his confident belief of the watchful care and ministry of angels about good men, Psal. xxxiv. and 7. "The "angel of the LORD encampeth about them that fear "him, and delivereth them." And Ps. xci. 11, 12. speaking of the good man, who putteth his trust, and confidence in GOD, he tells him for his comfort and security, that the holy angels have a particular charge of him to preserve him from all the mischiefs and dangers to which he is exposed ; "he shall give his "angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy "ways ; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest "thou dash thy foot against a stone."

So that according to the persuasion of those two excellent persons, and of greatest renown for piety in all the old testament, very much of the safety and the success of good men, even in their temporal concerns, is to be ascribed to the vigilant care and protection of good angels. And though this be seldom visible and sensible to us, yet we have great

great reason, upon so great testimonies, to assent to the truth of it. And there is no reason I think to doubt, but that GOD's care extends now to Christians, as well as it did to the Jews; and that the angels have as much kindness for us, as they had for the Jews; and there is no reason to think, that the angels are now either dead or idle.

Our SAVIOUR tells us, that they cannot die; and our reason tells us that a pure spirit is an active principle; and the scripture represents angels as all flame and wings. Evil spirits are believed by Christians to be as active now, to all purposes of harm and mischief, as ever: and why should any man imagine, that good spirits are not as intent and busy to do good? The apostle (I am sure) tells us in the text, that the angels in common (all of them) do employ their service about us, and wait to do good offices to us; "are they not all (says he) ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?"

And our SAVIOUR, Matt. xviii. 10. seems to approve and confirm the tradition of the Jews, concerning particular guardian angels belonging to every one that believed in him, that is, to every Christian; "Take heed (says he) that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven, their angels always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." And this seems likewise to have been a received opinion among the first Christians; for we find, Acts xii. 15. that when Peter was miraculously released out of prison by an angel, and came to the house where the Christians were assembled to pray for him, and one told them, "that Peter was at the door, they said it was his angel;" thinking that he himself was fast in prison:

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son : For which saying there could be no reason, had there not been a current opinion among them of guardian angels.

And because the providence of God is more peculiarly concerned, in conducting men to eternal happiness ; it is very credible, that God should more especially ordain the ministry of angels about good men, for the furtherance of their salvation. And so the apostle tells us in the text ; “ are they not all “ ministring spirits, sent forth to minister for them “ that shall be heirs of salvation ? ” Nay, our SAVIOUR, in that remarkable place I mentioned before, Matt. xviii. 10. seems to intimate, that angels of a higher rank and quality are assigned guardians and guides to those that believed on him ; “ but I say “ unto you, that in heaven, their angels do always “ behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven : ” an allusion to the manner of earthly kings, upon whom not all the servants, but the chief of the nobility do more immediately attend, and stand continually in their presence ; for to behold the face of the king, and to stand in his presence, are phrases used in scripture to signify immediate attendance upon his person. So that by this manner of expression our SAVIOUR doth most significantly intimate, in what esteem good men are with God, whose care and protection he commits to the chief of the angels, to those who are nearest to him, and in highest favour and honour with him ; as if he had said, their angels are not of the ordinary rank, but such as are admitted to a more immediate attendance upon the great king and governor of the world.

And no doubt it is for no mean end, that such high and glorious spirits are employed about us ; it is chiefly for the furtherance of our salvation ; for the

the purchasing whereof, the Son of God himself ("whom all the angels of heaven worship") came down from heaven, and appeared and suffered in our nature, that we may one day "be made like to the angels," and dwell where they are, and may "continually behold the face of our father which is in heaven as they do." And in order to this end, it is very probable, that good angels are ready to do good offices, just contrary to those of evil spirits, that is, to employ their best diligence and endeavour for the salvation of men; and that they are very sedulous and officious to restrain and pull them back from sin, and to excite and solicit them to that which is good; and, in a word, to do all they can to help forward the repentance and conversion of sinners. And this may reasonably be collected from that passage of our SAVIOUR, Luke xv. 10. where he tells us, "that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." And if they be so glad of the repentance of a sinner; we may easily imagine how forward they are, to further and promote so good a work. And when sinners are brought to repentance; we have no reason to doubt, but that the angels are as ready to assist their progress in goodness.

It hath been a general, and I think not ill-grounded opinion, both of the Jews and Heathens, that good angels are more especially present with us, and observant of us, and assistant to us, in the performance of all acts of religion; that they are particularly present at our prayers: and therefore the Jews speak of a particular angel for this purpose, whom they call the angel of prayer; that they observe our vows, and our breach or performance of them. So Solomon seems to intimate, Ecclef. v. 4, 6. "When

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“ thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools; pay that which thou hast vowed. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin:” that is, do not intangle thy life with a rash vow, which the frailty of human nature may make thee afterwards to break; “ neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error; that is, do not in the presence of the angel who attends upon thee, and observes thee, betray thine own error and rashness. This I take to be the meaning of this difficult passage, “ let not thy mouth cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error.”

But the angels are yet more particularly present in the places and at the times of God’s publick worship. The placing of the cherubims in the holy of holies, seems to signify the presence of the angels in our most religious addresses to God. And Plutarch says, that the angels are the overseers of divine service. And therefore we ought to behave ourselves with all modesty, reverence, and decency in the worship of God, out of regard to the angels, who are there present, and observe our carriage and behaviour. And to this the apostle plainly hath respect in that place, which by interpreters hath been thought so difficult, 1 Cor. xi. 10. where he says, “ that for this cause,” in the assembly of Christians for the worship of God, “ the woman ought to have a vail upon her head,” in token of subjection to her husband, “ because of the angels;” that is, to be decently and modestly attired in the church, because of the presence of the holy angels; before whom we should compose our selves to the greatest external gravity and reverence, which the angels behold and observe, but cannot penetrate into the inward devo-

tion of our minds, which God only can do; and therefore with regard to him who sees our hearts, we should more particularly compose our minds, to the greatest sincerity and seriousness in our devotion. Which I would to God we would all duly consider, all the while we are exercised in the worship of God, who chiefly regards our hearts. But we ought likewise to be very careful of our external behaviour, with a particular regard to the angels, who are present there, to see and observe the outward decency and reverence of our carriage and deportment: of which we are very careful in the presence even of an earthly prince when he either speaks to us, or we make any address to him. And surely much more ought we to be so, when we are in the immediate presence of God, and of his holy angels, every one of whom is a much greater prince, and of greater power, than any of the princes of this world. But how little is this considered, (I speak to our shame) and by how few among us!

And as angels are helpful to good men, in working out their salvation, throughout the course of their lives; so at the hour of death, they stand by them, to comfort them and assist them in that needful and dismal time, in that last and great conflict of frail mortality with death and the powers of darkness; to receive their expiring spirits into their charge, and to conduct them safely into the mansions of the blessed. And to this purpose also the Jews had a tradition; that the angels wait upon good men at their death, to convey their souls into paradise: which is very much countenanced by our SAVIOUR, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 22. where it is said, "that when Lazarus died, he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."

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Nay, that the angels have some charge and care of the bodies of good men after death, may not improbably be gathered from that passage in St. Jude, ver. 9. where Michael the archangel is said to have "contended with the devil, about the body of Moses." What the ground of this controversy betwixt them was, may be most probably explained, by a passage, Deut. xxxiv. 6. where it is said, "that God took particular care (probably by an angel) concerning the burying of Moses in a certain valley;" and it is added, "but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." The devil it seems had a fair prospect of laying a foundation for idolatry, in the worship of Moses after his death; if he could have gotten the disposal of his body, to have buried it in some known and publick place. And no doubt, it would have gratified him not a little, to have made him, who was so declared an enemy to idolatry all his life, an occasion of it, after his death. But this God thought fit to prevent, in pity to the people of Israel, whom he saw upon all occasions so prone to idolatry; and for that reason committed it to the charge of Michael the archangel, to bury his body secretly; and this was the thing which Michael the archangel contended with the devil about.

But before I pass from this, I cannot but take notice of one memorable circumstance in this contest, mentioned likewise by St. Jude, in these words, "yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation." His duty restrained him from it, and probably his discretion too: as he durst not offend God, in doing a thing so much beneath the dignity and perfection of his nature; so he could not but think, that the devil

would

would have been too hard for him at railing; a thing to which as the angels have no disposition, so I believe that they have no talent, no faculty at it. The cool consideration whereof should make all men, especially those who call themselves divines, and especially in controversies about religion, ashamed and afraid of this manner of disputing; since "Michael the archangel, even when he disputed with the devil, durst not bring against him a railing accusation."

But to proceed. This we are sure of, that the angels shall be the great ministers and instruments of the resurrection of our bodies, and the reunion of them to our souls. For so our blessed SAVIOUR has told us, Matth. xxiv. 30, 31. That "when the Son of man shall come in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; he shall send his angels to gather the elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

Thus I have as briefly as I could, and so far as the scripture hath gone before us, to give us light in this matter, endeavoured to shew the several ways wherein good angels do minister in behalf of them who shall be heirs of salvation. All that now remains, is to draw some inferences from this discourse, and so I shall conclude.

First, What hath been said upon this argument, and so abundantly proved from scripture, may serve to establish us in the belief of the truth, and to awaken us to a due consideration of it. That the angels are invisible to us, and that we are seldom sensible of their presence, and the good offices they do us, is no sufficient reason against the truth and reality of the thing; if by other arguments we are convinced of it. For by the same reason we may almost as well call
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in question the existence of God, and of our own souls; neither of which do fall under the notice of our senses; and yet by other arguments we are sufficiently convinced of them both. So in this case, the general consent and tradition of mankind, concerning the existence of angels, and their ministry about us, especially being confirmed to us, by clear and express testimony of holy scripture, ought to be abundant evidence to us; when we consider that so general a consent must have a proportionable cause; which can be no other, but a general tradition grounded at first upon revelation, and derived down to all succeeding ages, from the first spring and original of mankind; and since confirmed by manifold revelations of God, both in the old and new testament.

But yet I am sensible, that all this is no conviction to the perverse and contentious. Men will not believe even the evidence of sense itself, when they are strongly prepossessed and prejudiced to the contrary: for do we not see great numbers of men, even so many as have the face to call themselves the catholick church, that can make a shift, when they have a mind, either to believe or disbelieve things contrary to the plainest evidence of their senses? All that I shall say farther about this matter, is, that this doctrine of angels is not a peculiar doctrine either of the jewish or christian religion, but the general doctrine of all religions that ever were; and therefore cannot be objected against by any but the Atheists.

And yet after all, I know not whence it comes to pass, that this great truth, which is so comfortable to mankind, is so very little considered by us. Perhaps the corruption of so great a part of the christian church, in the point of the worship of angels, may have run us so far into the other extreme, as scarcely

to acknowledge any benefit we receive by them. But SERM.
surely we may believe they do us good, without any LXXV.
obligation to pray to them; and may own them as
the ministers of God's providence, without making
them the objects of our worship.

I confess it seems to me a very odd thing, that
the power of the devil, and his influence upon men,
and the particular vigilancy and activity of evil spirits
to tempt us to sin, should be so readily owned, and
so sensibly talked of among Christians; and yet the
assistance of good angels should be so little taken no-
tice of, and considered by us. The scripture speaks
plainly of both, and the reasons for believing both
are equal: for God forbid but that good angels
should be as officious and forward to do us good, as
the devil and his angels are malicious and busy to do
us mischief. And indeed it would be very hard with
mankind, if we had not as much reason to hope for
the assistance and protection of good spirits, as we
have cause to fear the malice and fury of the bad.
Good angels are certainly as powerful, and have as
strong a propension and inclination to do good, as
the devil has to do harm; and the number of good
angels is probably much greater, than of evil spirits.
The biggest number that are used in scripture, are
applied to good angels. Dan. vii. 10. it is said of
"the angels about God's throne, that thousand
"thousands ministred unto him, and ten thousand
"times ten thousand stood before him." And Re-
velations v. 11. "the number of them" is said to be,
"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of
"thousands." And the apostle to the Hebrews,
ch. xii. 22. calls them, "an innumerable company
"of angels."

What

What then should be the reason, that men should be so apt to own the snares and temptations, which the devil lays before us, in all our ways; but take so little notice of the attendance and good offices, done to us by good Spirits? I can imagine but these two reasons, and I am sorry I can find no better; that we are more mindful of injuries than of benefits: and are glad to take in others for the excuse of our faults; but are loth any should come in for a share in the good that is done by us. And yet methinks it should be a very comfortable consideration to us, against the enmity and cunning of the devil and his angels; that the holy angels of God are as intent and industrious to do us good, and to help forward our salvation, as evil spirits can be to work our ruin and destroy us.

Secondly, We should with great thankfulness acknowledge the great goodness of God to us, who takes such care of us, as to appoint his angels, and to give them particular commission and charge concerning us, to protect and assist us in all our ways, and especially to promote the great concernment of our eternal happiness: and that not only some particular and inferior spirits but the chief ministers of this great king of the world, those that “stand in his presence, and behold his face;” and not a few of these, but the whole order of them are employed about us. So the apostle seems to say, by the question which he puts in the text, “are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister?” That is, all, at one time or other. And though they be principally appointed to minister to us in order to our salvation; yet we have no reason to doubt but God employs them many times for our temporal safety, and makes use of them more especially in those great revolutions, in which

which his cause and religion are more immediately concerned.

In such a case, it is not at all incredible, that God should give his angels a particular charge, concerning those that fight his battles; to pitch about their camps, and secretly to assist them against their enemies, and to ward off, and put by many dangerous blows and thrusts, which are made at them; and wonderfully to preserve them, when the instruments of death fly about them, and do execution on every side of them. To what can we ascribe such and so many remarkable deliverances of a person upon whom so much depends; but either to the immediate hand of God, or to the ministry of angels? And where God is provided so abundantly, with such powerful beings and ministers of his will; though they may be invisible to us, yet there is great reason to believe, that he very seldom works without them.

And now what an astonishing regard is this, which the great God is pleased to have for the sons of men, that he should make the whole creation serviceable to us; not only the visible creation, for the support of our bodies, and the diversion of our minds; but even the noblest of all his creatures, the great and glorious inhabitants of the invisible world, mightily surpassing us mortal men, in the simplicity and purity of their nature, in the quickness and largeness of their understandings, and in their power and vigour of acting; I say, that God should give these excellent and glorious beings the charge over us, and send them forth to minister to us, for the safeguard of our persons, for the success of our affairs, and for the security and furtherance of our eternal salvation! "LORD, what is man that thou art" thus "mind-ful of him;" that when "thou madest him low-

“er than the angels,” thou shouldest yet “make the angels to minister unto him!”

Thirdly, If the angels have the particular charge of good men, we should take heed how we despise, or be any way injurious to them: for how despicable soever they may appear to us, they are certainly very dear to God; since he deems them so considerable, as to employ his chief ministers about them, and to commit the charge of them to those, who by their office do more immediately attend upon himself. This is our SAVIOUR's own argument, Mat. xviii. 10. “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, their angels do continually behold the face of your father, which is in heaven.” With how much contempt soever we may look upon a poor good man; he hath friends and patrons of a higher sort, than any of the princes of this world.

Fourthly, If God appointed angels to be ministering Spirits in our behalf; we may thence very reasonably conclude, that God did not intend, that we should worship them. This seems to be a clear consequence, if the reasoning of the angel in the revelation be good; where he forbids St. John to worship him; “because he was his fellow-servant.” Yea the consequence seems to be yet stronger from the text; that if they be not only fellow-servants but do in some sort minister unto us; then we are not to worship them.

And yet this practice is openly avowed in the church of Rome; though it be reproved so very severely by the apostle, as an apostasy from christianity, Colos. ii. 18, 19. “Let no man (says he) deceive you, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels; not holding the head;” as if it were a re-

“nouncing

nouncing of CHRIST, out of a pretended humility, to make use of other mediators besides him to the Father. And notwithstanding also that the angel in the revelation does so vehemently forbid it, ὅσα μὴ by no means, upon no terms to do it; and he forbids it for such a reason, as makes it for ever unlawful; namely, that we ought not to worship those, who serve and worship God together with us; “do it not, says the angel, I am thy fellow servant, “worship thou God.” In which words, he plainly directs us to the sole and proper object of our worship.

Bellarmino the great champion of the popish cause, never used more gross and apparent shuffling, than in answer to this text. He says first, why are we reprov'd for doing what St. John did? To which the answer is very easy; because St. John himself was reprov'd by an angel, for doing what he did. And now that his question is answered, one might methinks ask him a cross question or two. Why does the church of Rome presume to do that, which an angel does so expressly forbid to be done? Or was it fit for St. John to worship one, who (according to Bellarmine) was so ignorant in the doctrine of the catholick church, as to reprove him for doing his duty? As is evident from his second crafty answer to this text, That St. John did well to give due worship to the angel: and yet it is plain from this text, that the angel did not think the worship which St. John gave him, to be his due.

It is very hard to imagine, but that a man of Bellarmine's understanding, did intend to give up the cause, in his answers to this text: but if he was in earnest, then the matter is brought to this plain and

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short issue; whether it be fitter for us to believe a cardinal of Rome, or an angel of God?

Lastly, We should imitate the holy angels, by endeavouring to serve God as they do, in ministring to the good of others. Whilst we are in the body, in this state of infirmity and imperfection; though we cannot serve God with the same activity and vigour that the blessed angels do, yet we may in the same sincerity, and with the same true pleasure and delight.

And we should learn also of them, to condescend to the meanest services, for the good of others. If the angels, who are no ways allied to us, do so much excel us, in the dignity and perfection of their nature, (for though David says, that "God made man" little lower than the angels;" his meaning is, that he made him next below the angels in the rank of beings; but yet very distant from them in perfection) I say if those glorious creatures, who are the chief of the ways and works of God, do not think much to humble themselves to be ministers on our behalf; shall we be so proud as to think much to stoop to the lowest offices, to serve one another?

You see, my brethren, what is the constant work and employment of the blessed spirits above; to do good to men, especially in order to their eternal happiness; and this is the highest degree of charity, and charity is the highest perfection of men and angels: so that to employ ourselves, with all our minds, and with all our might, to help forward the salvation of others, is to be good angels (I had almost said to be a kind of gods) to men.

I hope that we all of us do hope one day to be like the angels, in the purity and perfection of their nature.

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nature. So our SAVIOUR has told us, that "at the resurrection we shall be like the angels:" now as they are the patterns of our hope and happiness; so let us make them the examples of our duty and obedience: according as our SAVIOUR hath taught us to pray, "that GOD's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" that is, that we may serve GOD, and do his will here on earth, (so far as the infirmity of our nature and of our present state will admit) with the same readiness and diligence, with the same cheerfulness and zeal, that the holy and blessed angels do in heaven. And let us aspire continually in our minds, after that blessed time, when we shall be free from sin and sorrow, from affliction and pain, from diseases and death; when we shall serve GOD without distraction, and do his will without weariness, and shall "be for ever with the LORD, amidst an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect."

Finally, Let us bless GOD, as for all the visible effects of his merciful providence towards us, so likewise for the invisible aids and protection of his holy angels; many times probably vouchsafed to us, when we are but little aware of it. But above all, let us, bless him for his Son, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, who "was made a little lower than the angels," that is, a mortal man; "that by the suffering of death" for our sakes, "he might be clothed with glory and honour, according to the working of that mighty power which GOD wrought in CHRIST, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, and might, and domination, and every name that is named, not only in

" this

“ this world, but also in that which is to come. To
 “ him O Father, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be
 “ all honour and glory, dominion and power, both
 “ now and for ever.” Amen.

Preached
 on St.
 Luke's
 day.

S E R M O N LXXVI.

The reputation of good men, after
 death.

P S A L M CXII. 6.

The latter part of the verse.

The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

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AS the desire and hope of immortality, which is implanted in human nature, is some evidence of the thing; so likewise that natural desire which is in men, to have a good name perpetuated, and to be remembered, and mentioned with honour, when they are dead and gone, is a sign, that there is in human nature some presage of a life after death; in which they hope, among other rewards of well-doing, to meet with this also, to be well spoken of to posterity: and though probably we should not know the good that is said of us, when we are dead, yet it is an encouragement to virtue, to be secured of it before-hand; and to find by experience, that they who have done their part well in this life, go off with

with applause; and that the memory of their good actions is preserved and transmitted to posterity.

And among the many advantages of piety and virtue, this is not altogether inconsiderable, that it reflects an honour upon our memory after death; which is a thing much more valuable, than to have our bodies preserved from putrefaction: for that I think is the meaning of Solomon, when he prefers a good name before precious ointment. Eccl. vii. 1.

“A good name is better than precious ointment.”

This they used in embalming of dead bodies, to preserve them from noisomeness and corruption: but a good name preserves a man's memory, and makes it grateful to posterity; which is a far greater benefit, than that of a precious ointment which serves only to keep a dead body from stench and rottenness.

I shall briefly explain the words, and then consider the matter contained in them; “the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.” By the righteous is probably here meant the good man in general; for though justice and righteousness are in scripture frequently used for that particular virtue, whereby a man is disposed to render to every man his own; which is known by the name of justice; yet it is less frequently, and perhaps in this place, used in a larger sense, so as to comprehend all piety and virtue. For so the righteous man is described at the beginning of this psalm, “blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments:” and he is opposed to the wicked man, ver. 10. “the wicked shall see it, and be grieved;” that is, he shall be troubled to see the prosperity of the righteous; the manifold blessings of his life, and the good name he shall leave behind him at his death; which is the meaning “of his being in
“ever-

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“everlasting remembrance;” that is, long after he is dead, perhaps for many ages, he shall be well spoken of, and his name mentioned with honour, and his good deeds recorded and remembered to all posterity.

So that the sense of the words amounts to this, that eminently good men, do commonly leave a good name behind them, and transmit a grateful memory of themselves to after-ages. I say commonly, for so we are to understand this kind of sayings; not that they are strictly, and universally true, without exception; but usually, and for the most part. It is possible, that a good man may soon be forgotten, by the malice of men, or through the partiality and iniquity of the age, may have his name blemished after death, and be mis-represented to posterity: but for the most part it is otherwise; and though the world be very wicked, yet it seldom deals so hardly and unjustly with men of eminent goodness and virtue, as to defraud them of their due praise and commendation after death. It very frequently happens otherwise to good men, whilst they are alive; nay they are then very seldom so justly treated, as to be generally esteemed and well spoken of, and to be allowed their due praise and reputation: but after death, their good name is generally secured and vindicated, and posterity does them that right, which perhaps the age wherein they lived denied to them. Therefore in the prosecution of this argument, I shall enquire into these two things.

First, whence it comes to pass, that good men are very often defrauded of their just praise and reputation, whilst they are alive? And,

Secondly, what security they have of a good name after death?

First,

First, whence it comes to pass, that good men are so frequently defrauded of their just praise and reputation, while they are alive? and to give ourselves full satisfaction in this matter, two things are fit to be enquired into.

1. From what cause this proceeds?

2. For what reason the providence of God doth often permit it?

(1.) From what cause it proceeds, that good men have so often the hard fate to be ill spoken of, and to be severely censur'd, and to have their worth much detracted from, while they are alive?

And this proceeds partly from good men themselves; and partly from others.

1. Good men themselves, are many times the cause of it. For the best men are imperfect; and present and visible imperfections do very much lessen and abate the reputation of a man's goodness. It cannot be otherwise, but that the lustre of a great piety and virtue should be somewhat obscured, by that mixture of human frailty, which does necessarily attend this state of imperfection: and though a man by great care and consideration, by great vigilancy and pains with himself, be arrived to that degree and pitch of goodness, as to have but a very few visible failings, and those small, in comparison; yet when these come to be scan'd and commented upon, by envy, or ill-will, they will be strangely inflamed and magnified, and made much greater, and more than in truth they are. But there are few persons in the world, of that excellent goodness, but besides the common and more pardonable frailties of humanity, they do now and then discover something, which might perhaps justly deserve a severe censure,

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if some amends were not made for it, by many and great virtues.

Very good men are subject to considerable imprudences, and sudden passions; and especially to an affected severity and moroseness of carriage; which is very disgustful, and apt to beget dislike. And they are the more incident to these kind of imperfections; because out of a just hatred of the vicious customs and practices of the world, and to keep out of the way of temptation, they think it safest to retire from the world as much as they can; being loth to venture themselves, more than needs, in an infectious air. By this means, their spirits are apt to be a little sour, and they must necessarily be ignorant of many points of civility, and good humour which are great ornaments of virtue, though not of the essence of it.

Now two or three faults in a good man, if an uncharitable man have but the handling and managing of them, may easily cast a considerable blemish upon his reputation; because the better the man is, the more the more conspicuous are his faults; as spots are soonest discovered, and most taken notice of, in a pure and white garment. Besides that, in matters of censure, mankind do much incline to the harder side; and but very few persons are so charitable and equal, as to construe things to the best sense, and to consider a man all together; and fairly to set the good that is in him against his faults and imperfections. But,

2. Though good men many times contribute too much to the lessening of their own reputation, with those among whom they live; yet the principal cause of their suffering in this kind is not from themselves, but others; and that upon these three accounts,

1. From

i. From the hatred and opposition of bad men to holiness and virtue; and these are commonly the greatest number, and make the loudest cry. They are declared enemies to goodness; and then how can it be expected, they should have any great kindness for good men? They want virtue themselves; and therefore they think themselves upbraided by the good qualities of others.

This enmity of wicked men against the righteous, and the true reason of it, is very well express'd, in the wisdom of Solomon, chap. ii. 12. "Let us (say they) lye in wait for the righteous; because he is not for our turn, and is clean contrary to our doings; he upbraideth us with our offending the law, and he objecteth, to our infamy, the sins of our youth; he was made to reprove our thoughts, therefore he is grievous unto us, even to behold; for his life is not like other men, he is quite of another fashion; we are esteemed of him as reprobate silver, he abstaineth from our ways, as from filthiness." This is that which filleth the minds of wicked men with malice against the righteous; and malice will easily invent ways to blast any man's reputation. Good men do sometimes, as it is their duty, reprove those that are bad; or if they do it not in word, yet they upbraid them in their actions, and contrary course of life; and both these are grievous and provoking to them. Not but that wicked men are many times in their consciences convinced of the real goodness of those whom they speak against; but they will not own it, lest in so doing they should condemn themselves.

2. Another cause of this is the envy of those, who perhaps have some degree of goodness themselves. For great virtue is apt to raise envy in those who fall

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short of it; and this makes those who are but imperfectly good, to detract from the eminent worth of others; because they are sensible, they are outshined by them, and that it occasions a disadvantageous comparison, and makes their defects taken notice of.

They can endure a man that is moderately good, and keeps pace with his neighbours: but if he endeavour to outstrip them, they presently combine against him, and take all opportunities to undermine his reputation; and will be very glad, either to find a blot in his escutcheon, or to fix one there.

3. There is something in the very presence and nearness of goodness and virtue, which is apt to lessen it.

In matters of sense, the nearer the object is, the bigger it appears; and the farther distant it is from us, the less it seems to be: but here it is quite otherwise; men are not so apt to value present worth, when yet they will reverence it mightily at a distance.

I know not whence it comes to pass, but so we certainly find it; that men are more sensible of the goodness and excellency of any thing, under the want of it, than while they enjoy it; and do usually value it more when it is gone, than they did whilst it was present with them. Whilst we live with good men, and converse with them every day, we take but little notice of them; but no sooner are they departed, but we admire them, and every man's mouth is open to celebrate their good qualities. Perhaps familiarity, and acquaintance, and conversation does insensibly beget something of contempt; but whatever the reason of it be, we find the thing most certainly true in experience.

(2.) Let

(2.) Let us consider in the next place, for what reasons the providence of God permits it thus to be? I shall mention but these two. SERM.
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1. To keep good men humble, and, as the expression is in Job, “to hide pride from men.”

God’s providence, in the disposal and ordering of things in this world, seems rather to consult our safety, than our satisfaction; and the security of our virtue, than the full reward of it. Now if good men should always meet with that clear esteem and reputation, which their goodness deserves, they would be in great danger of being puffed up with a proud conceit of themselves; and pride is enough to supplant the greatest virtue in the world; such a dead fly, as this, were sufficient to spoil a box of the most precious ointment. For man is an ambitious creature, and vain above all things; so vain, as not only to be covetous of praise, but even patient of flattery; and the best of men lye too open, on this blind side of human nature; and therefore God, who knows our frame, and how apt dust and ashes are to be proud, hath in his wise and merciful providence so disposed things, that good men are seldom exposed to the full force of so strong a temptation. And for this reason, he lets loose envious and malicious tongues, to detract from good men, for a check to the vanity of human nature, and to keep their virtue safe, under the protection of humility.

And this is the way likewise to secure the reputation which they have, and which otherwise would be in danger of being lost: for he that is once proud of the esteem he hath got, takes the readiest way to fall into contempt; and certainly it is better of the two, that our reputation should suffer a little by the malice of others: than be ruin’d by our own pride and vanity.

God

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GOD does not envy good men the reputation of their goodness and virtue; but he knows the weakness of human nature, and "will not suffer it to be tempted, above what it is able." When good men are grown up to perfection, and able to bear it, as they will be when they come to heaven, their good name shall be fully vindicated, and they shall have praise, not only from men, but from angels, and from God himself.

2. This life is not the proper season of reward, but of work and service.

In this life, God is pleased to give some present encouragement to piety and virtue, but reserves the main of our recompence, to be bestowed upon us at the end of our work. When our course is finished, then, and not before, we must expect our crown; when our accounts are cast up, and stated, and it appears what improvement we have made of our talents, then will come, the *euge bone serve*, "well done good and faithful servant." In the mean time, good men must be content with such a portion of esteem, as an envious and ill-natured world will afford them.

And thus I have done with the first thing I proposed to enquire into; whence it comes to pass, that good men are frequently defrauded of their due praise and reputation, while alive? I proceed to the

Second enquiry, namely, what security good men have of a good name after death?

And the true account of this is to be given, partly from the providence of God, and partly from the nature of the thing.

(1.) From the providence of God: which is concerned herein, upon a twofold account.

1. In respect of the equity of it.

2. In

2. In regard of the example of it.

1. In respect of the equity of it. God, who will not be behind-hand with any man, concerns himself, to secure to good men the proper reward of their piety and virtue. Now praise is one of the most proper recompences of good and virtuous actions ; this good men seldom meet with in this life, without a great deal of allay and abatement ; and therefore the providence of God hath so ordered things, that it should come in the properest season, when our work is done, and when we are out of the danger of the temptation of it.

2. In regard of the example of it. It is a great argument to virtue, and encouragement to men, to act their part well, to see good men applauded, when they go off the stage. Every man that hath any spark of generosity in him, is desirous of fame ; and though men care not how soon it comes, yet they will be glad to have it after death, rather than not at all. Piety and virtue would be but very melancholy and uncomfortable things ; if they should always be so unfortunate, as never to meet with due esteem and approbation : but when men are assured, that they shall have this reward, one time or other, and observe it to be so in experience ; this is a great spur and encouragement to do virtuously : and a great mind, that hath a just sense of reputation and a good name, will be content to lay in for it beforehand ; and patiently to wait the time, which God knows fittest for the bestowing of it.

(2.) The other part of the account of this truth, is to be given from the nature of the thing : because death removes and takes away the chief obstacle of a good man's reputation. For then his defects are out of sight, and men are contented that his imperfections

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fections should be buried in his grave with him. Death hath put him out of the reach of malice and envy, his worth and excellency does now no longer stand in other mens light; his great virtues are at a distance, and not so apt to be brought into comparison, to the prejudice and disadvantage of the living; *mortui non mordent*; the example of the dead is not so cutting a reproof to the vice of the living; the good man is removed out of the way, and his example, how bright soever, is not so scorching and troublesome at a distance; and therefore men are generally contented, to give him his due character.

Besides, that there is a certain civility in human nature, which will not suffer men to wrong the dead, and to deny them the just commendation of their worth. Even the scribes and pharisees (as bad a sort of men as we can well imagine) though they were just like their fathers in persecuting and slaying the prophets, while they were alive; yet had they a mighty veneration for their piety and virtue after they were dead, and thought no honour too great to be done to them. They would be at the charge of raising monuments to the memory of those good men, whom their fathers had slain; and whom they would certainly have used in the very same manner, had they either lived in the days of those prophets, or those prophets had lived in their days, as our SAVIOUR plainly told them.

All that now remains is, to draw some inferences from what hath been said, by way of application; and they shall be these three.

1. To vindicate the honour and respect which the christian church, for many ages, hath paid to the memory of the first teachers and martyrs of our religion.

2. To

2. To encourage us to piety and goodness, from SERM
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this consideration; that “the righteous shall be in
“everlasting remembrance.”

3. That when we pretend to honour the memory of good men, we would be careful to imitate their holiness and virtue.

1. To vindicate the honour, which the christian church hath for many ages done to the first teachers and martyrs of our religion; I mean more especially to the holy apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR; to whose honour, the christian church hath thought fit to set apart solemn times, for the commemoration of their piety and suffering, and to stir up others to the imitation of them.

This certainly can with no good colour, either from scripture or reason, be pretended to be unlawful; and when David here says, “the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance;” he cannot certainly be thought to exclude the most solemn way of commemorating their piety and virtue.

I do not pretend, this custom can be derived from the very first ages of christianity; but surely it is sufficient, for the lawfulness of it, that it is no where forbidden; nay it is rather required here in the text; the best way to preserve the memory of good men, being thus to commemorate them. And it may be of great use to us, if it be not our own fault; the setting before our eyes, the holy lives of excellent men, being in it's own nature apt to excite us to the imitation of them.

Besides that I could tell you, that though this cannot be proved so ancient, as some vainly pretend; yet it is of great antiquity in the Church, and did begin in some of the best ages of christianity. *Memoria Martyrum*, the meetings of christians at the tombs

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of the martyrs was practised long before the degeneracy of the western church; and the Christians went at those meetings, solemnly to commemorate the faith and constancy of those good men, and to encourage themselves from their examples.

I know very well, that this did in time degenerate into gross superstition, which afterward gave colour and occasion to that gross and idolatrous practice in the church of Rome, of worshipping saints. But this abuse is no sufficient reason for us, to give over the celebrating of the memory of such holy men, as the apostles and martyrs of CHRIST were, and propounding them to our selves for our patterns. We may still lawfully give them their due honour, though the church of Rome hath so over-done it, as to rob GOD of his.

2. Let this consideration, that "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," be an encouragement to us, to piety and goodness. This to a generous nature, that is sensible of honour and reputation, is no small reward and encouragement. Before the happiness of heaven was clearly revealed, and "life and immortality brought to light, by the gospel," one of the greatest motives to worthy and virtuous deeds, was the earnest desire which men had of leaving a good name behind them, and of perpetuating the fame and glory of their actions to after-ages. Upon this ground, chiefly, many of the bravest spirits, among the heathen, were animated to virtue, and, with the hazard of their lives, to do great and glorious exploits for their country.

And certainly, it is an argument of a great mind, to be moved by this consideration; and a sign of a low and base spirit, to neglect it. He that hath no regard to his fame, is lost to all purposes of virtue and

and goodness; when a man is once come to this, not to care what others say of him, the next step is, to have no care what himself does. *Quod conscientia est apud Deum, id fama est apud homines*, what conscience is in respect of God, that is fame in respect of men. Next to a good conscience, a clear reputation ought to be to every man the dearest thing in the world. Men have generally a great value for riches; and yet the scripture pronounceth him the happier man, that leaves a good name, than him that leaves a great estate behind him, Prov. xxii. 1. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."

If then we have any regard to a good name; the best way to secure it to our selves, is by the holy and virtuous actions of a good life. Do well, and thou shalt be well spoken of; if not now, yet by those who shall come after; the surest way to glory, and honour, and immortality, is by a patient continuance in well-doing. God hath engaged his promise to us to this purpose, 1 Sam. ii. 30. "Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed." "The name of the wicked shall rot," says Solomon, Prov. x. 7. But God doth usually take a particular care, to preserve and vindicate their memory, who are careful to "keep his covenant, and remember his commandments to do them."

3dly and lastly, whenever we pretend to do honour to the memory of good men, let us charge our selves with a strict imitation of their holiness and virtue. The greatest honour we can do to God, or good men, is to endeavour to be like them; to express their virtues, and represent them to the world in our lives. Upon these days, we should propound to our selves as our patterns, all those holy and ex-

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cellent persons, who have gone before us ; the apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR, and all those blessed saints and martyrs, " who were faithful to the death, " and have received a crown of life and immortality."

We should represent to ourselves the piety of their actions, and the patience and constancy of their sufferings, that we may imitate their virtues, and " be " followers of them, who through faith and patience, " have inherited the promises ; and seeing we are " compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses," we should " lay aside every weight, and run with " patience the race that is set before us."

Let us imagine all those great examples of piety and virtue, standing about us in a throng, and fixing their eyes upon us. How ought we to demean ourselves in such a presence, and under the eye of such witnesses ! and how should we be ashamed to do any thing, that is unworthy of such excellent patterns, and blush to look upon our own lives, when we remember theirs ! Good God ! at what a distance do the greatest part of Christians follow those examples ! and while we honour them with our lips, how unlike are we to them in our lives !

Why do we thus reproach our selves with these glorious patterns ? Let us either resolve to imitate their virtues, or to make no mention of their names ; for while we celebrate the examples of saints and holy men, and yet contradict them in our lives, we either mock them, or upbraid our selves.

Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, &c.

S E R-

S E R M O N LXXVII.

Preached
on 'All-
saints day,
1684.

The duty of imitating the primitive teachers, and patterns of christianity.

H E B. XIII. 7.

The latter part of the verse.

Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

The whole verse runs thus,

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of GOD ; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

THE great scope and design of this epistle, is S E R M.
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to persuade the Jews, who were newly converted to christianity, to continue stedfast in the profession of it, notwithstanding all the sufferings and persecutions it was attended withal ; and to encourage them hereto, among many other arguments which the apostle makes use of, he doth several times in this epistle propound to them the examples and patterns of saints and holy men, that were gone before them ; especially those of their own nation, who in their respective ages had given remarkable testimony of their faith in GOD, and constant adherence to the truth, chap. vi. 11, 12. “ And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope, unto the
“ end :

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“end: that ye be not slothful; but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” And chap. xi. he gives a catalogue of the eminent heroes and saints of the old testament, who by faith had done such wonders, and given such testimony of their patience and constancy, in doing and suffering the will of God; from whence he infers, chap. xii. 1. that we ought to take pattern and heart from such examples, to persevere in our christian course; “wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of” martyrs, or “witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us;” especially since they had greater examples than these, nearer to them, and more fresh in memory; the great example of our LORD, the founder of our religion; and of the first teachers of christianity, the disciples and apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR. The example of our LORD himself, the captain and rewarder of our faith, ver. 2. of that xiith chap. “Looking unto JESUS the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame:” ver. 3. “For consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds.” This indeed is the great pattern of Christians, and, in regard of the great perfection of it, surpasseth all other patterns, and seems to make them useless; as having in it the perfection of the divinity, not in it’s full brightness, (which would be apt to dazzle rather than direct us) but allayed and shadowed with the infirmities of human nature; and for that reason, more accommodate and familiar to us, than the divine perfections abstractedly considered.

But

But yet because our blessed SAVIOUR was GOD as well as man, and clear of all stain of sin, (for though he was clothed with the infirmities, yet he was free from the corruption of human nature) therefore the examples of mere men, liable to sin as we are, may in many respects be more suitable and accommodate, to encourage us to the imitation of those virtues, which are attainable by us, in this state of imperfection; for which reason the apostle hath thought fit likewise to propose to us, the highest examples of that kind, the first teachers of our religion; for of these he seems to speak here in the text, namely those apostles, or apostolical men, by whom they had been instructed in the faith of CHRIST, but who were now departed this life; it being very probable, that the apostle here speaks of such as were dead, when he says, "remember them, which have had the rule over you," (or, those that have been your guides) "who have spoken to you the word of GOD, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

I say this is very probable, because he minds them to remember, which supposeth them to be absent; but especially, because he minds them, to consider the end of their conversation; by which surely he means the blessed state of those good men after death: which is elsewhere called, "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls," 1 Pet. i. 9. So likewise, Rom. vi. 22. this is said to be the end of a holy life; "ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end, everlasting life." And it very much favours this interpretation, that the apostle afterwards speaks of the living guides, and governors of the church, ver. 17. "Obey them which have the rule over you, and submit your selves, for they watch for your souls."

So that it is highly probable, that the apostle here speaks of such guides, and governors of the church, as had once been over them, but were now departed this life; and therefore he might with more freedom and less envy, recommend their example to them, and bid them call to mind their faith, and exemplary conversation among them, and propose it for a pattern to themselves, considering the happy end of it, viz. the blessed state they were now in, and the glorious reward they were made partakers of, in another life.

In the words thus explained, you have,

I. A duty enjoined; which is, to propose to ourselves, for our imitation, the examples of good men, that have gone before us; especially the primitive patterns of christianity, and the first teachers of our religion. "Remember them which have been your guides, and have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow."

II. The motive or encouragement to it, from the consideration of the reward of it; considering the end of their conversation.

I. The duty enjoined; which is, to propose to ourselves, for our imitation, the example of good men, that have gone before us; especially the primitive patterns of christianity, and first teachers of our religion. "Remember them that have had the rule over you," that have been your guides, "and have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow." In which words, the apostle bids them call to mind their first guides and instructors in christianity, whom they had known, and heard, and conversed with in this world, but who now rested from their labours, and were receiving the reward of them; to remember the doctrines they had heard from them.

them, and the virtues they had seen in them; and to embrace the one, and imitate the other.

Thus we cannot remember the primitive teachers, and patterns of christianity, the apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR; because we did not personally know them, and converse with them, living at the distance of many ages from their time: but we may do that which is equivalent, and a kind of remembrance of them; we may commemorate their faith, and the virtue and holiness of their lives; and what we hear and read of them, we may propose for patterns to ourselves, and copy them out in our lives and actions: and this is our duty, and the same in substance with theirs, who had the happiness to know, and converse with those excellent persons, to hear them preach, and to see the rules and precepts of that holy doctrine, which they taught, exemplified in their lives.

In the handling of this argument, I shall do these three things.

First, Shew why amongst all the examples of good men, we should more especially propose to our imitation, the primitive teachers, and patterns of our religion.

Secondly, Wherein we should imitate them. The apostle expresseth it in one word, in their faith; "whose faith follow."

Thirdly, The encouragement to this, from the consideration of the happy state they are in, and the glorious reward they are made partakers of; "considering the end of their conversation."

First, I shall endeavour to shew, why among all the examples of good men, we should more especially propose to our imitation, the primitive teachers and patterns of our religion, I mean, the holy apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR, "whose faith," we

should endeavour "to follow," and to imitate the holiness and virtue of their conversation. For these certainly come nearest to that most perfect, and excellent pattern of all goodness, our blessed SAVIOUR, and are the fairest transcripts of that unblemished original. Hence it is that St. Paul so frequently exhorts Christians to imitate his example, and the examples of the other apostles; it being reasonable to presume that they came nearest to the pattern of our LORD 1 Cor. xi. 1. "Be ye followers of me, even as I am," so am of CHRIST," Phil. iii. 17. "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample. For our conversation is in heaven."

And this is reasonable, that the first in every kind should be the rule and pattern of the rest, and of all that follow after; because it is likely to be most perfect. In process of time, the best institutions are apt to decline, and by insensible degrees to swerve, and depart from the perfection of their first state; and therefore it is a good rule, to preserve things from corruption and degeneracy, often to look back to the first institution, and by that to correct those imperfections and errors which will almost unavoidably creep in with time.

If we would preserve that purity of faith and manners, which our religion requires, we should have frequent recourse to the primitive teachers and patterns of christianity, and endeavour to bring our belief and lives to as near a conformity with theirs, as is possible. Who so likely to deliver the faith and doctrine of CHRIST pure, and uncorrupted, as the primitive teachers of it, who received it from our LORD himself; and were by an extraordinary assistance of the holy Spirit, secured from error and mis-

stake

stake in the delivery of it? And who so likely to bring their lives and conversations to an exact conformity with this holy doctrine, as they, who were so thoroughly instructed in it by the best master, and shewn the practice of it in the most perfect example of all holiness and virtue? Great reason there is therefore, why all Christians should follow their faith, and make their conversation more especially the pattern of their lives.

The want of a due regard to these fountains of christian doctrine, and the first and best patterns of christian practice, hath been the great cause of that foul degeneracy of the Romish church, both in the doctrine and practice of christianity. They do not follow the faith of the apostles, the first fathers and teachers of christianity; but of the fathers of the council of Lateran and Trent. Thus have they “faken the fountain of living waters,” the holy scriptures, “and have hewn to themselves broken cisterns, that will hold no water;” the doctrines and traditions of men. Nay, they have stopt up this “fountain of living waters” from the people, and forbid them to come to it; and forced them to drink of those impure and puddled streams, which they let out to them; and instead of the lives of the holy apostles, and those eminent graces and virtues which shined forth in them, they represent to them the patterns of new saints; some of which neither they nor their fathers knew, and indeed never were in being; as St. Almanach, and St. Synoris, and several others; many of them so far from being saints, that they may be reckoned among the worst of men; (for instance, our countryman Thomas a Becket, who for pride and rebellion may almost vie with Lucifer himself; and yet this ill man and worst of subjects, was canonized

to that height, as for two hundred years together to engross the worship of these western parts of the world, and to impoverish the shrines of all other saints, even of the blessed virgin herself;) others, such ideots, or hot-headed fanatics, that he that reads their lives, would take them to be fools and madmen, rather than saints, (as Francis, and Dominick, and Ignatius Loyola, and several others of the same stamp; and many the very best of them, so disguised by their legends, that instead of the substantial virtues of a good life, their story is made up of false and fantastical miracles, and ridiculous freaks of superstition.

All which considered, there is great reason, why we should have recourse to the primitive patterns of faith and holiness, “and be followers of them, whom we are sure “were followers of CHRIST.” I proceed to the

Second thing I proposed, namely, wherein we should imitate these patterns. And the apostle expresseth it in one word, in their faith, “whose faith follow.” And the word faith is frequently in the new testament used so largely, as to comprehend the whole condition of the gospel; a firm belief of the doctrine of it, and the fruit and effect of this belief, in a good conversation. And that faith here in the text, takes in a holy life, is evident from what follows, “whose “faith follow, considering the end of their conversation;” from whence it is evident, that the apostle speaks of such a faith, as shews forth itself in a good conversation.

So that we may very well suppose the apostle here to recommend the primitive faith to our imitation, in these four respects.

1. In regard of the sincerity and purity of it.
2. In regard of the firmness and stability of it.
3. Of

3. Of their constancy and perseverance in it.
4. Of the efficacy and fruitfulness of it, in a good conversation. All these may be collected from the expressions and circumstances of the text.

1. We are to imitate these primitive patterns, in the sincerity and purity of their faith; I mean, that the faith which we profess, be the sincere doctrine of christianity, and the pure word of God, free from all mixture of human additions and inventions, and not made up, as the faith of the Pharisees was among the Jews, and theirs of the church of Rome is at this day, of the word of God, and the doctrines and traditions of men; not like the creed of pope Pius IV. (which is now the standard of the Roman faith) consisting of the 12 old articles of the christian faith, delivered to us by CHRIST and his apostles, and as many new ones, coined and stamped by their later councils. This is not "to follow the faith" of the apostles, and first patterns of christianity, "the faith once delivered to the saints," as St. Jude calls it. This is to have our faith stand upon the authority of men, and not on the word of God; whereas we are "to follow the faith of the first guides" of the christian church, "who spake unto them the word of God," as the apostle expressly chargeth here in the text.

2. We are to imitate them, in the stability and firmness of our faith, and not suffer ourselves to be shaken, and removed from it, by every wind of new doctrine; the faith of CHRIST being unchangeable, as CHRIST himself. And that by following the faith of the primitive guides and teachers of christianity, the apostle here means, that we should "be steadfast and unmovable" in it, is plain from what follows immediately after the text; "whose faith

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follow,

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“ follow, considering the end of their conversation
 “ JESUS CHRIST, the same yesterday, and to day
 “ and for ever. Be not carried about with diverse
 “ and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing, that
 “ the heart be established with grace,” that is, in
 the doctrine of the gospel, which is frequently called
 “ the grace of God.”

3. We are to imitate them, in the constancy and
 perseverance of their faith; and that, notwithstanding
 all the discountenance and opposition, the persecution
 and suffering which attend the profession of
 this faith; which the apostle sufficiently intimates in
 this epistle, to have been the condition of those Chris-
 tians, to whom he wrote; and therefore he pro-
 poseth so many examples to them, of constant and
 patient suffering for God and his truth; and it is
 probable enough, that the apostle here recommends
 the example of those, who were the primitive mar-
 tyrs, as well as teachers of christianity. He had be-
 fore proposed to them the living examples of those
 who were under actual persecution and sufferings for
 the gospel, ver. 3. “ remember those that are in
 “ bonds, and those that suffer adversity;” and here
 in the 7th verse he seems to propose the pattern of
 those, who had laid down their lives and died for the
 faith; “ remember those who have been your guides
 “ and have spoken to you the word of God, whose
 “ faith follow, considering the end of their conver-
 “ sation,” τὴν ἐκβασιν τῆς ἀναστροφῆς, which may be
 rendered, the last act of their lives, the manner of
 their going out of the world, perhaps by martyrdom;
 as if he had said, imitate them in their constancy and
 perseverance in the faith, even to the last, in laying
 down their lives for it. And thus we should be ready
 to do, if God calls us to it. However, it is cer-

tail

tain the apostle meant their constancy and perseverance in the faith, to the last, and their dying in, if not for the faith of CHRIST. And this is necessary, if we expect the crown of life, and hope for the same happy end, which they had; for none but "they that continue to the end, shall be saved."

4. We should imitate them, in the efficacy and fruitfulness of their faith, in the practice and virtues of a good life. "Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation," that is, their perseverance in a holy course to the end. And these must never be separated; a sound faith, and a good life. Without this, our faith is barren and dead, as St. James tells us, ch. ii. ver. 17. Our knowledge and belief of the christian doctrine, must manifest itself in a good conversation. "Who is a wise man," (says the same St. James, ch. iii. ver. 13.) "who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge amongst you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works." "This is a faithful saying," saith St. Paul to Titus, ch. iii. 8. "and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have believed in GOD, be careful to maintain good works."

And herein the apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR were eminent examples. They lived as they taught, and practised the doctrine which they preached. So St. Paul strictly chargeth Timothy. 1 Tim. iv. 12. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity." And our SAVIOUR tells us, that hereby chiefly false prophets and teachers might be known from the true apostles of CHRIST, Matth. vii. 20. "By their fruits ye shall know them." And indeed we do not follow the faith of those excellent persons, if

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if we do not “abound in all the fruits of righteousness, which, by JESUS CHRIST, are to the praise and glory of God.” I come now to the

Third and last thing I proposed, viz. the encouragement to this, from the consideration of the happy state of those persons, who are proposed to us for patterns, and the glorious reward which they are made partakers of in another world. Considering the end of their conversation τὴν ἑξῆς, their egress or departure out of this life, into a blessed and glorious state, where they have received the crown and reward of their faith and patience, and pious conversation in this world; or else (which comes much to one,) considering the conclusion of their lives, with what patience and comfort they left the world, and with what joyful assurance of the happy condition they were going to, and were to continue in for ever.

And this is a great encouragement to constancy and perseverance in faith and holiness, to see with what cheerfulness and comfort good men die, and with what a firm and steady persuasion of the happiness they are entering upon. For who would not be glad to leave the world, in that calmness and serenity of mind, and comfortable assurance of a blessed eternity? Bad men wish this, and are ready to say with Balaam, “let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.” But if we would have the comfort of such a death, we must live such lives, and imitate the faith and good conversation of those whom we desire to resemble in the manner of their death, and to go into the same happy state that they are in after death. If we do not make their lives our pattern; we must not expect to be conformable to them, in the happy manner of their death.

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When we hear of the death of an eminent good man, we do not doubt but he is happy ; and are confident, that he will meet with the reward of his piety and goodness in another world. If we believe this of him, let us endeavour to be like him ; that we may obtain the same happiness, which we believe him to be possessed of, and, as the apostle exhorts, chap. vi. 12. “ let us not be slothful ; but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Let us shew the same diligence that they did ; that we may have the same full assurance of hope unto the end, which they had.

The inference from this discourse, which I have made upon this argument, is, to shew what use we ought to make of these excellent examples, which are set before us, of the first founders and teachers of our religion, and what is the proper honour and respect, which we ought to pay to their memory : not invocation and adoration ; but a zealous imitation of their faith, and good conversation. The greatest honour we can do them, the most acceptable to God, the most grateful to them, and the most beneficial to ourselves, is to endeavour to be like them : not to make any images, and likenesses of them, to fall down before them, and worship them ; but to form the image of their faith and virtues upon our hearts and lives : not to pray to them ; but to praise God for such bright and glorious examples, and to endeavour with all our might to imitate their faith, and patience, and piety, and humility, and meekness, and charity, and all those other virtues which were so resplendent in them. And this is to remember the founders of our religion as we ought, “ to follow their faith,” and “ to consider the end of their conversation.”

Had the christian religion required, or intended any such thing, as of latter times hath been practised in the world; it had been as easy for the apostle to have said, remember them that have been your guides and have spoken to you the word of God, to erect images to them, and to worship them with due veneration, and to pray to them and make use of their intercession. But no such thing is said, or the least intimation given of it, either in this text, or any other in the whole bible; but very much to the contrary.

Their example indeed is frequently recommended to us, for our imitation and encouragement; and for this reason, the providence of God hath taken particular care, that the memory of the apostles, and so many primitive Christians and martyrs, should be transmitted to posterity; that Christians in all succeeding ages might propound these patterns to themselves, and have perpetually before their eyes the piety and virtue of their lives, and their patient and constant sufferings for the truth; that when God shall please to call us to the like trial, "we may not be wearied and faint in our minds; but being comforted, we may have said, as the apostle, "I have passed about with such a cloud of witnesses," having so many examples in our eye of those, "who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and do now as it were look down from their happy state upon us here below, who are combating with manifold temptations, to see how we behave and acquit ourselves in our christian course, we may take encouragement to ourselves, from such examples and such spectators, to "run with patience the race which is set before us."

I know indeed that other use than this hath been and is at this day made of the memory of the saints

and martyrs of former ages, very dishonourable to God, and very grievous to them, if they be sensible of what is done here below; I mean to worship them, and to pray to them, and (to the great disparagement of the powerful intercession of "our great high priest, JESUS the Son of God") to make them the mediators and intercessors in heaven with God for us. Of this the scripture hath no where given us the least intimation; but hath expressly commanded the contrary, "to worship the LORD our GOD, and him only to serve; and to pray to him alone, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, who is the only mediator betwixt GOD and man." Nor are there any footsteps of any such practice, in the primitive church, for the first three hundred years; as is acknowledged by our most learned adversaries of the church of Rome.

The scripture no where propounds the saints to us, for objects of our worship; but for the patterns of our lives. This is the greatest respect and veneration, that we can, or ought to pay to them; and whatever is beyond this, is a voluntary humility, injurious to GOD and our blessed SAVIOUR, and most certainly displeasing to those, whom we pretend to honour; if they know how men play the fool about them here below.

Let us then endeavour to be like them, in the holy and virtuous actions of their lives, in their constant patience and suffering for the truth; if GOD shall call us thereto. And we may be like them, if we do but sincerely endeavour it, and pray to GOD for his grace and assistance to that end. For these examples were not left for our admiration only; but for our imitation. We frequently read the lives of the apostles and first founders of our religion: but I

know not how it comes to pass, we choose rather lazily to admire them, than vigorously to follow them; as if the piety of the first Christians were miraculous, and not at all intended for the imitation of succeeding ages; as if heaven and earth, God and men, and all things were alter'd, since that time; as if christianity were then in it's youthful age and vigour, but is since decayed, and grown old, and hath quite lost it's power and virtue. And indeed the generality of Christians live at such a faint and careless rate, as to make the world believe, that either all the stories of the primitive Christians are fables; or else, that the force of christianity is strangely abated, and that the holy Spirit of God hath forsaken the earth, and is retired to the Father. But truth never grows old, and those laws of goodness and righteousness, which are contained in the gospel, are still as reasonable, and apt to gain upon the minds of men, as ever. God is the same he was, and our blessed SAVIOUR is still at the right hand of God, interceding powerfully for sinners, for "mercy and "grace to help in time of need." The promises and threatnings of the gospel are still as true and powerful as ever; and the holy Spirit of God is still in the world, and effectually works in them that believe.

Let us not then deceive ourselves in this matter. The primitive Christians were "men like ourselves, "subject to the same passions that we are, and com- "passed about with the same infirmities;" so that although that extraordinary spirit and power of miracles, which God endowed them withal, for the first planting and propagating of the gospel in the world, be now ceased; yet the sanctifying power and virtue

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of God's holy Spirit, does still accompany the gospel, and is ready to assist us in every good work.

In a word, we have all that is necessary to work the same graces and virtues in us, which were in them; and if we be not slothful, and wanting to ourselves, we may "follow their faith," and at last "attain the end of it, even the salvation of our souls."

Let us then, from an idle admiring of those excellent patterns, proceed to a vigorous imitation of them, and be so far from being discouraged by the excellency of them, as to make even that matter and ground of encouragement to ourselves; according to that of Tertullian, *admonetur omnis ætas fieri posse, quod aliquando factum est*; "all ages to the end of the world may be convinced, that what hath been done, is possible to be done." There have been such holy and excellent persons in the world; and therefore it is possible for men to be such.

"Let us not then be slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Since we are compassed about with such a cloud of witnesses; let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily begets us, and let us run with patience the race which is set before us, looking unto JESUS the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God."

Preached
on All-
saints day.

S E R M O N LXXVIII.

The encouragement to suffer for
CHRIST ; and the danger of deny-
ing him.

2 TIM. II. 11, 12.

*It is a faithful saying ; for if we be dead with him, we
shall also live with him : if we suffer, we shall also
reign with him : if we deny him, he also will deny us.*

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IN the beginning of this chapter, St. Paul en-
courageth Timothy to continue stedfast in the
profession of the gospel, notwithstanding the suffer-
ings which attended it ; ver. 1. “ Thou therefore
“ my son, be strong in the grace which is in CHRIST
“ JESUS ;” and ver. 3. “ Thou therefore endure
“ hardship, as a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST.”
And to animate him in his resolution, he quotes a
saying, which it seems was well known and firmly
believed among Christians ; a saying on the one hand
full of encouragement to those who with patience and
constancy suffered for their religion ; and on the other
hand, full of terror to those who for fear of suffer-
ing denied it.

“ It is a faithful saying.” This is a preface used by
this apostle, to introduce some remarkable sentence,
of more than ordinary weight and concernment ;
1 Tim. i. 15. “ This is a faithful saying, and wor-
“ thy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came
“ into

“ into the world to save sinners ;” and chap. iv. 8,
9. “ Godliness is profitable unto all things, having
“ a promise of the life that now is, and of that which
“ is to come. This is a faithful saying, and wor-
“ thy of all acceptation.” Titus iii. 8. “ This is
“ a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou
“ affirm constantly, that they which have believed
“ in GOD, might be careful to maintain good works.”
And here in the text, the same preface is used to
signify the importance of the saying he was about to
mention ; “ it is a faithful saying ; if we be dead
“ with him, we shall also live with him : if we suf-
“ fer, we shall also reign with him : if we deny him,
“ he also will deny us.”

The first two sentences are matter of encouragement
to those who suffer with CHRIST, and for him, and
are the very same in sense. “ If we be dead with him,”
that is, if we lay down our lives for the testimony of
the truth, as he did, “ we shall also live with him,”
that is, we shall in like manner be made partakers
of immortality, as he is : “ if we suffer” or endure
as he did, “ we shall also reign with him” in glory.

The other sentence is matter of terror to those
who deny him and his truth. “ If we deny him,
“ he also will deny us ;” to which is subjoined ano-
ther saying much to the same sense ; “ if we believe
not,” *εἰ ἀπιστοῦμεν*, if we be unfaithful ; “ yet he re-
“ maineth faithful, he cannot deny himself ;” that is,
he will be as good as his word, and make good that
solemn threatening which he hath denounced against
those, who shall for fear of suffering deny him, and
his truth.

The words being thus explained, I shall begin
with the first part of this remarkable saying ; “ if we
“ be dead with him, we shall also live with him : if
“ we

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“ we suffer, we shall also reign with him.” This, it seems, was a noted saying among Christians ; and whether they had it by tradition of our SAVIOUR, or whether it was in familiar use among the apostles, as a very proper and powerful argument to keep Christians stedfast to their religion, I cannot determine. It is certain, that sayings to this sense are very frequent, especially in the epistles of St. Paul, Rom. vi. 5. “ For if we have been planted together “ in the likeness of his death ; we shall be also in “ the likeness of his resurrection.” And verse 8. “ Now if we be dead with CHRIST ; we believe that “ we shall also live with him.” 2 Cor. iv. 10. “ Always bearing about in the body, the dying of “ our LORD JESUS ; that the life also of JESUS “ might be made manifest in our body.” And verse 18. “ For we which live, are always delivered unto “ death for JESUS sake ; that the life also of JESUS “ might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” And Rom. viii. 17. “ If so be that we suffer with “ him, that we may be also glorified together.” Phil. iii. 10, 11. “ That I may know him, and the power “ of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death : if “ by any means I might attain unto the resurrection “ of the dead.” 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13. “ Beloved, “ think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, “ which is to try you, as though some strange thing “ happened unto you ; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye “ are partakers of CHRIST’s sufferings ; that when “ his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also “ with exceeding joy.”

You see that the sense of this saying was in frequent use among the apostles, as a powerful argument to encourage Christians to constancy in their religion,

religion, notwithstanding the dangers and sufferings which attended it. "This is a faithful saying: if

"we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

"if we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

And the force of this argument will best appear; by taking into consideration these two things;

I. What virtue there is in a firm belief and persuasion of a blessed immortality in another world, to support and bear up mens spirits under the greatest sufferings for righteousness sake; and even to animate them, if God shall call them to it, to lay down their lives for their religion.

II. How it may be made out to be reasonable, for men to embrace and voluntarily to submit to present and grievous sufferings, in hopes of a future happiness and reward; concerning which we have not, nor perhaps are capable of having, the same degree of certainty and assurance which we have of the evils and sufferings of this present life.

I. What virtue there is in a firm belief and persuasion of a blessed immortality in another world, to support and bear up mens spirits, under the greatest sufferings for righteousness sake: and even to animate them, if God shall call them to it, to lay down their lives for their religion.

If men do firmly believe that they shall change this temporal and miserable life for an endless state of happiness and glory, and that they shall meet with a reward of their sufferings infinitely beyond the proportion of them, both in the weight and duration of it; this must needs turn the scales on that side, on which there is the greatest weight: and there is a sufficient ground for a firm belief of this. For if any thing can certainly be concluded from the providence of God, this may, that good men shall

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be happy one time or other: and because they are very often great sufferers in this life; that there is another state remains for them after this life, wherein they shall meet with a full reward of all their sufferings for righteousness sake.

But besides the reasonableness of this, from the consideration of GOD's providence, we have now a clear and express revelation of it; "life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel." This St. John tells us is the great promise of the gospel, 1 John ii. 25. "This is the promise which he hath promised us; even eternal life." And this promise, our SAVIOUR most expressly makes to those who suffer for him, Matt. v. 10, 11, 12. "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Mark x. 29, 30. "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's; but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, with persecutions," (that is, so far as a state of persecution would admit) "and in the world to come eternal life."

And if such a persuasion be firmly fixed in our minds; the faith of another world, and the assured hope of eternal life and happiness, must needs have a mighty force and efficacy upon the minds of sober and considerate men; because there is no proportion between suffering for a little while, and being unspeakably and eternally happy. So St. Paul tells us he calculated the matter, Rom. viii. 18. "I reckon

" (says

and the danger of denying him.

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" (says he) that the sufferings of this present time, " are not worthy to be compared with the glory " which shall be revealed in us." The vast disproportion between the sufferings of a few days, and the joys and glory of eternity, when it is once firmly believed by us, will weigh down all the evils and calamities of this world, and give us courage and constancy under them. For why should we faint ; if we believe, that " our light affliction, which is " but for a moment, will work for us a far more " exceeding and eternal weight of glory ?" As the same St. Paul assures us, 2 Cor. iv. 17. If our minds be but thoroughly possess'd with the hopes of a resurrection to a better and happier life ; this will make death, attended even with extremity of terror, to be tolerable ; as we read of some, in that long catalogue of saints and martyrs, Heb. xi. 35. " Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance ; " that they might obtain a better resurrection." It would make a man to rejoice in the ruin and dissolution of this earthly tabernacle, to be assured, that " when it is dissolved, we shall have a building of " God, a house not made with hands, eternal in " the heavens," as the same apostle assures us, 2 Cor. v. 1. Thus you see what virtue there is in the firm belief and persuasion of a better life, to bear up mens spirits under those sufferings and torments which may seem unsupportable to human nature.

And so indeed they would be, without an extraordinary grace and assistance of God to enable them to bear those sufferings, which his providence permits them to be exercised withal. But of this extraordinary grace, we are assured, not only from the consideration of the attributes and providence of God ; but likewise from the express promises and declarations of his word.

The attributes of GOD and his providence give us good ground to believe that he who loves goodness and righteousness, and hath a peculiar favour and regard for good men, will never suffer his faithful friends and servants to be brought into that distress for righteousness sake, that they shall not be able to endure those evils and afflictions which befall them upon that account : and if in the course of his providence, any thing happen to them that is above the ordinary constancy and patience of human nature to bear, that in such a case, GOD will extraordinarily interpose, and give them strength and patience, support and comfort, proportionable to the evils and sufferings that are upon them ; and that he will either lighten their burden, or add to their strength ; he will either mitigate their pain, or increase their patience ; either he will check and restrain the effect of natural causes, as in the case of the three children, that were in the fiery furnace ; and of Daniel, who was cast into the den of lions ; or else, (which comes to the same issue) if he will suffer causes to have their natural course, he will afford supernatural comforts to balance the fury and extremity of them. This is very credible, from the mere consideration of GOD's goodness, and of the particular care and favour of his providence towards good men.

But besides this, we have the express promise and declaration of GOD's word, to this purpose, which puts us out of all doubt concerning that which we had good reason to hope and expect before, 1 Cor. x. 13. St. Paul there tells the Christians at Corinth, that though they had met with some troubles, yet they had not been tried with the extremity of suffering : but when that should happen, they had no

cause

cause to doubt, but GOD would enable them to bear it. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man;" that is, you have not yet been exercised with any trial, but what is human; what the ordinary strength and resolution of human nature is able to bear: but in case it should come to extreme suffering, and that they must either comply with the heathen idolatry, or endure extremity of torments; they had the promise of GOD's help to support them in that case, "GOD is faithful, says he, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it;" and then it follows, "wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry;" that is, let no suffering that you are tempted withal, make you guilty of this sin. And 1 Pet. iv. 14. the presence of GOD's Spirit, in a very glorious manner, for our support and comfort, is promised to those who suffer for him. "If ye be reproached for the name of CHRIST, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of GOD resteth upon you."

And this consideration of GOD's strength to support us under sufferings, makes the other, of the reward of them, a perfect and complete encouragement; which it could not be without it. For if, upon the whole matter, the present sufferings of good men were intolerable, and human nature were not divinely assisted to bear them: how great soever the future reward promised to them should be; they that lay under them would be forced to consult their own present ease and deliverance. I proceed to the

II. Thing I proposed to consider, namely, how it may be made out to be reasonable to embrace and voluntarily to submit to present and grievous sufferings,

ings, in hopes of future happiness and reward ; concerning which we have not, nor perhaps are capable of having, the same degree of certainty and assurance which we have of the evils and sufferings of this present life.

Now granting that we have not the same degree of certainty concerning our future happiness, that we have of our present sufferings which we feel, or see just ready to come upon us ; yet prudence making it necessary for men to run this hazard, does justify the reasonableness of it. This I take to be a known and ruled case in the common affairs of life, and in matters of temporal concernment ; and men act upon this principle every day. The husbandman parts with his corn, and casts it into the earth, in confidence that it will spring up again, and at the time of harvest bring him in a considerable return and advantage. He parts with a certainty, in hope only of a great future benefit : and though he have no demonstration, for the infallible success of his labour and hazard ; yet he acts very reasonably : because if he does not take this course, he runs a greater and more certain hazard, of perishing by famine at last, when his present stock is spent. The case of the merchant is the same, who parts with a present estate, in hopes of a future improvement ; which yet is not so certain, as what he parts withal.

And if this be reasonable in these cases ; then the hazard which men run, upon much greater assurance than either the husbandman or the merchant hath, is much more reasonable. When we part with this life in hopes of one infinitely better ; that is, “in sure
“ and certain hope of a resurrection to eternal life :” and when we submit to present sufferings, to avoid an eternity of misery, which is much more to be
dreaded

dreaded than temporal want, this is reasonable ; because here is a much greater advantage in view, and a more pressing necessity in the case ; nothing being so desirable to one that must live for ever, as to be happy for ever ; and nothing to be avoided by him with so much care, as everlasting misery and ruin. And for our security of obtaining the one, and escaping the other, we have “ the promise of God, who cannot lie ; ” which is all the certainty and security that things future and invisible are capable of.

Nay, I will go lower. If God had made no express promise and declaration of a future happiness and reward, to those that serve him and suffer for him : yet if any man out of a sincere love to God, and awful regard to his laws, endure trouble and affliction, if there be a God and providence this is assurance enough to us, that our services and sufferings shall one time or other be considered and rewarded. For as sure as any man is, that there is a God, and that his providence regards the actions of men ; so sure are we, that no man shall finally be a loser by any thing that he doth or suffers for him.

So that the matter is now brought to this plain issue, that if it be reasonable to believe there is a God, and that his providence regards and considers the actions of men ; it is also reasonable to endure present sufferings, in hope of a future reward ; and there is certainly enough in this case, to govern and determine a prudent man, that is in any good measure persuaded of another life after this, and hath any tolerable consideration of, and regard to his eternal interest.

Indeed, if we were sure, that there were no life after this ; if we had no expectation of a happiness or misery beyond this world ; the wisest thing that
any

any man could do, would be to enjoy as much of the present contentments and satisfactions of the world, as he could fairly come at. For "if there be no resurrection to another life;" the apostle allows the reasoning of the epicure to be very good "let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die." But on the other hand, if it be true that we are designed for immortality, and that another state remains for us after this life, wherein we shall be unspeakably happy, or intolerably and eternally miserable, according as we have behaved ourselves in this world; it is then evidently reasonable, that men should take the greatest care of the longest duration, and be content to bear, and dispense with some present trouble and inconvenience, for a felicity that will have no end; and be willing to labour and take pains, and deny our present ease and comfort for a little while that we may be happy for ever. This is reckoned prudence in the account of this world, for a man to part with a present possession and enjoyment, for a much greater advantage in reversion: but surely the disproportion between time and eternity is so vast, that did men but firmly believe that they shall live for ever, nothing in this world could reasonably be thought too good to part withal, or too grievous to suffer, for the obtaining of a blessed immortality.

In the virtue of this belief and persuasion, the primitive Christians were fortified, against all that the malice and cruelty of the world could do against them; and they thought they made a very wise bargain, if "through many tribulations they might" at last "enter into the kingdom of God;" because they believed, that the joys of heaven would abundantly recompense all their sorrows and sufferings upon earth. And so confident were they of this,

that

that they looked upon it as a special favour and regard of God to them, to call them to suffer for his name. So St. Paul speaks of it, Phil. i. 29. "Un-
" to you it is given, on the behalf of CHRIST, not
" only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his
" sake." Yea, they accounted them happy, who
upon this account were miserable in this world. So
St. James expressly pronounceth them, Jam. i. 12.
" Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ;"
(meaning the temptation of persecution and suffer-
ing) " for when he is tried, he shall receive the
" crown of life, which the LORD hath promised to
" them that love him." And this consideration
was that which kept up their spirits, from sinking
under the weight of their greatest sufferings. So St.
Paul tells us, 2 Cor. iv. 14, 16. " Knowing that
" he which raised up the LORD JESUS, shall raise
" up us also by JESUS. For which cause we faint
" not ; but though our outward man perish, yet
" the inward man is renewed day by day." The
sufferings of their bodies did but help to raise and
fortify their spirits : nay, so far were they from faint-
ing under those afflictions, that they rejoiced and
gloried in them. So the same apostle tells us, Rom.
v. 2, 3. that in the midst of their sufferings, " they
" rejoiced in hope of the glory of God ; and that
" they gloried in tribulations," as being the way to
be made partakers of that glory : and Heb. x. 34.
that " they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods ;
" knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a
" better and an enduring substance." And for this
reason, St. James, chap. i. 2. exhorts Christians " to
" account it all joy, when they fall into divers
" temptations ;" (that is, various kinds of suffer-
ings)

ings) because of the manifold advantages which from thence would redound to them.

Now what was it that inspired them to all this courage and chearfulness, but the belief of a mighty reward, far beyond the proportion of all their sufferings, and a firm persuasion that they should be vast gainers by them at the last? This consideration St. Paul urgeth with great force, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. "Our
" light affliction, which is but for a moment, work-
" eth for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight
" of glory : whilst we look not at the things which
" are seen ; but at the things which are not seen :
" for the things which are seen, are temporal ; but
" the things which are not seen, are eternal." If we would compare things justly, and attentively regard and consider the invisible glories of another world, as well as the things which are seen ; we should easily perceive, that he who suffers for God and religion, does not renounce happiness ; but puts it out to interest, upon terms of the greatest advantage.

I shall now speak briefly to the

Second part of this remarkable saying in the text ;
" if we deny him, he also will deny us : " to which is subjoined in the words following, " if we believe
" not ; *εἰ ἀπιστοῦμεν*, if we deal unfaithfully with him ;
" yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself ; " that is, he will be constant to his word, and make good that solemn threatening which he hath denounced against those, who for fear of suffering shall deny him and his truth before men, Mat. x. 33. "Who-
" soever (saith our LORD there) shall deny me
" before men, him will I also deny before my Fa-
" ther which is in heaven." Mark viii. 38. "Who-
" soever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of
" my

“ my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation,
“ of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when
“ he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the
“ holy angels.” This is a terrible threatening, “ to
“ be disowned by CHRIST at the day of judgment,
“ in the presence of GOD and his holy angels;” and
this threatening will certainly be made good; and
though we may renounce him, “ and break our
“ faith with him; yet he remains faithful,” who
hath threatned, and “ cannot deny himself.”

This is matter of great terror, and seriously to be
thought upon by those who are tempted to deny
CHRIST and his truth, either by the hope of world-
ly advantage, or the fear of temporal sufferings.
What worldly advantage can we propose to ourselves,
by quitting our religion, which can be thought an
equal price, for the loss of our immortal souls, and
of the happiness of all eternity? Suppose the whole
world were offered us in consideration; yet “ what
“ is a man profited; if he should gain the whole
“ world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a
“ man give in exchange for his soul?” As our SA-
VIOUR reasons, Mat. xvi. 26.

And on the other hand, if the fear of temporal
suffering be such a terror to men, as to shake their
constancy in religion, and to tempt them to renounce
it; the fear of eternal torments ought to be much
more powerful, to keep them stedfast to their religion,
and to deter them from the denial of it. If fear will
move us; then in all reason, that which is most ter-
rible ought to prevail most with us, and the great-
est danger should be most dreaded by us, according
to our SAVIOUR’s most friendly and reasonable ad-
vice, Luke xii. 4, 5. “ I say unto you, my friends,
“ be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after

“ that have no more that they can do. But I will
 “ forewarn you whom you shall fear. Fear him,
 “ who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into
 “ hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.” If there
 can be no doubt, which of them is most to be dread-
 ed; there can be no doubt what we are to do, in
 case of such a temptation.

I shall now draw some inferences from this discourse
 by way of application.

First, If “ this be a faithful saying, that if we be
 “ dead with CHRIST, we shall also live with him;
 “ if we suffer, we shall also reign with him; but if
 “ we deny him, he will also deny us;” the belief
 of it ought to have a mighty influence upon us, to
 make us stedfast and unmoveable in the profession
 and practice of our holy religion. This inference the
 apostle makes from the doctrine of a blessed resur-
 rection, 1 Cor. xv. 58. “ therefore, my beloved bre-
 “ thren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abound-
 “ ing in the work of the LORD; forasmuch as
 “ ye know, that your labour is not in vain in the
 “ LORD.” If any thing will fix men in the profes-
 sion of their religion, and make them serious in the
 practice of it; the belief of a glorious resurrection,
 and of the reward which GOD will then give to his
 faithful servants, must needs have a very powerful in-
 fluence upon them to this purpose. Upon the same
 ground the apostle to the Hebrews exhorts them “ to
 “ hold fast the profession of their faith, without wa-
 “ vering; because he is faithful that hath promised.”
 If we be constant in the profession and practice of our
 holy religion; GOD will be faithful to the promise
 which he hath made of eternal life, “ to those who
 “ by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glo-
 “ ry and honour and immortality.”

If under the dark and imperfect dispensation of the law, good men shewed so much courage and constancy for God and religion, as we read in that long catalogue of heroes, Heb. xi. How much more should Christians, whose faith is supported much more strongly than theirs was, by a much clearer evidence of another life, and a blessed immortality, than they had; by more express promises of divine comfort and assistance under sufferings, than were made to them; and by the most divine and encouraging example, of the greatest patience under the greatest sufferings, that the world ever had, in the death and passion of the Son of God, "who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God!" When we consider this glorious example of suffering, and the glorious reward of it; how can we "be weary and faint in our minds!" If the saints and apostles of the old testament did such great things, by virtue of a faith, which relied chiefly upon the attributes and providence of God; what should not we do, who have the security of God's express promise for our comfort and encouragement! We certainly have much greater reason to take up our cross more chearfully, and to bear it more patiently, than they did.

Secondly, We should always be prepared in the resolutions of our minds, to suffer for the testimony of God's truth and a good conscience, if it should please God at any time to call us to it. This our SAVIOUR hath made a necessary condition of his religion, and a qualification of a true disciple. "If any man will be my disciple; let him take up his cross and follow me." So that we are to reckon upon it, and to prepare for it; that if it comes, we may not be surprized,

surprized, “ as if some strange thing had happened “ to us ;” and may not be unresolved what to do in such a case. And God knows when we may be called to it : however it is wise, to forecast it in our minds, and to be always in a preparation and readiness to entertain the worst that may happen ; that if it come, we may “ be able to stand out in an evil day ;” and if it does not come, God will accept the resolution of our minds, and reward it according to the sincerity of it : he that knows what we would have done, will consider it, as if we had done it.

Thirdly, The less we are called to suffer for God, the more we should think ourselves obliged to do for him ; the less God is pleased to exercise our patience, we should abound so much the more in the active virtues of a good life ; and our obedience to God should be so much the more chearful, and we more “ fruitful in every good work.” If there be no need of sealing the truth with our blood ; we should be sure to adorn and recommend it by our lives.

Fourthly and lastly, if the hopes of immortality will bear men up under the extremity of suffering and torments, and give men courage and resolution against all the terrors of the world ; they ought much more to make us victorious over the temptations and allurements of it. For certainly it is in reason much easier to forego pleasure, than to endure pain to refuse or lay down a good place, for the testimony of a good conscience, than to lay down our lives upon that account. And in vain does any man pretend that he will be a martyr, for his religion ; when he will not rule an appetite, nor restrain a lust, nor subdue a passion, nor cross his covetousness and ambition, for the sake of it, “ and in hope of that “ eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised.”

“mised.” He that refuseth to do the less, is not like to do the greater. It is very improbable, that a man will die for his religion, when he cannot be persuaded to live according to it. So that by this we may try the sincerity of our resolution concerning martyrdom. For what profession soever men make, he that will not deny himself the pleasures of sin, and the advantages of this world, for CHRIST; when it comes to the push, will never have the heart “to take up his cross, and follow him.” He that cannot take up a resolution to live a saint, hath a demonstration within himself, that he is never like to die a martyr.

S E R M O N LXXIX.

Preached
on All-
saints day.

The blessedness of good men, after
death.

R E V. XIV. 13.

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

I Will not trouble you with any nice dispute about the author of this book of the Revelation, or the authority of it; though both these were sometimes controverted; because it is now many ages since this book was received into the cannon of the scriptures,

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scriptures, as of divine authority, and as written by St. John. Nor shall I at this time enquire into the particular meaning of the several visions and predictions contained in it. It is confessedly, in several parts of it, a very obscure book ; and there needs no other argument to satisfy us that it is so, than that so many learned and inquisitive persons, have given such different interpretations of several remarkable passages in it ; as particularly concerning “ the slaying of the “ two witnesses, and the number of the beast.”

The words which I have read to you, though there be some difficulty about the interpretation of some particular expressions in them ; yet in the general sense and intendment of them, they are very plain, being a solemn declaration of the blessed state of good men after this life.

And that we may take the more notice of them, they are brought in with a great deal of solemn preparation and address, as it were on purpose to bespeak our attention to them : “ I heard a voice from “ heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the “ dead which die in the LORD, from henceforth.” And for the greater confirmation of them, the special testimony of the Spirit is added to “ the voice “ from heaven,” declaring the reason why they “ that die in the LORD,” are pronounced to be in so happy a condition : “ Yea, saith the Spirit, that “ they may rest from their labours ; and their works “ do follow them.”

In the handling of these words, I shall first enquire into the particular sense and meaning of them.

Secondly, Prosecute the general intendment of them, which I told you is to declare to us, the blessed state of those that die in the LORD, (that is) of saints and good men, after they are departed this life.

First,

First, I shall enquire into the particular sense and meaning of the words. To the clearing of which, nothing will conduce more, than to consider the occasion of them, which was briefly this. In the visions of this and the foregoing chapter, is represented to St. John, the great straits that the Christians, the true worshippers of the true God, should be reduced to. On the one hand, they are threatned with death; or if they be suffered to live, they are interdicted all commerce with human society, chap. xiii. 15. "And he had power to cause, that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed:" and verse 17. "that no man may buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast." And on the other hand, they that do worship the beast are threatned with damnation, chap. xiv. 9, 10. "If any man do worship the beast, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone." So that whenever this should happen, it would be a time of great trial to the sincere Christians, being threatned with extreme persecution on the one hand, and eternal damnation on the other; and therefore it is added in the 12th verse, "here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." This is represented in St. John's visions, as the last and extremest persecution of the true worshippers of God, and which should precede the final downfall of Babylon. And when this should happen, then he tells us, the patience of the saints would be tried to purpose, and then it would be seen, who are faithful to God, and constant to his truth; and upon this immediately follows the voice from heaven in the text; "and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me,

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“ Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD,
“ from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they
“ may rest from their labours; and their works do
“ follow them.”

The main difficulty of the words, depends upon the word ἀπαύρι, from henceforth; which interpreters do variously refer to several parts of the text. Some by changing the accent, and reading it, ἀπαρ-τι, would change the signification of the word into omnino; omnino beati sunt, they are altogether blessed, very happy, who die in the LORD. But this is altogether destitute of the countenance and warrant of any ancient copy. We will then suppose that the word is ἀπαύρι, and to be rendered as we translate it, from henceforth, from this time. All the difficulty is, to what part of the text we are to refer it. Some refer it to the word blessed; “ blessed from
“ henceforth are the dead which die in the LORD:” As if from this time, and not before, the souls of good men were, immediately after death, admitted into heaven; which, many of the ancient fathers thought, the souls of good men who died before the coming of CHRIST, were not. But then this blessedness ought to have been dated, not from the time of St. John’s vision, but of CHRIST’S ascension; according to that of St. Ambrose, in the hymn called *Te Deum*; “ when thou hadst overcome the sharp-
“ nefs of death, thou didst open the kingdom of
“ heaven to all believers.”

Others refer it to dying in the LORD; “ blessed
“ are the dead, that from henceforth die in the
“ LORD.” But this hath no peculiar emphasis in it; because they were “ blessed, that died in the
“ LORD,” before that time.

Others

good men, after death.

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Others refer it to the words following, concerning the testimony of the Spirit; "Yea, from henceforth, saith the Spirit." all these varieties agree in this sense in general; that some special blessedness is promised and declared to those who should die after that time: but what that is in particular, is not easy to make out.

But the most plain and simple interpretation, and that which seems to be most suitable to the occasion of these words, is this; that the word ἀπ' ἄρτι, from henceforth, is to be referred to the whole sentence, thus; "from henceforth, blessed are the dead which die in the LORD;" as if St. John had said, considering the extremity and cruel circumstances of this last and severe persecution, we may from that time forward reckon those, who are already dead, (supposing that they died in the LORD) to be very happy; in that they did not live to see and suffer those things, which will then befall the faithful servants of God, when "the devil shall come, having great wrath, because he knoweth he hath but a short time." Much in the same sense as Solomon, when he considered the oppressions that were done under the sun, says, Eccl. iv. 2. that "he praised the dead, which were already dead, more than the living, which were yet alive;" that is, considering the oppressions, which were so frequent in the world, he reckoned those happier that were out of it, than those who still lived in it.

And as this is very agreeable to the scope of what goes before, so it suits very well with what follows after, as the reason, why those persons are declared to be so happy; "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours: and their works do follow them;" that is, that they may be at

an end of their troubles and sufferings ; and may not be tried beyond their strength and patience, under that terrible persecution which will reign at that time ; and likewise that they may receive the reward of all the good they have done, and the evils they have suffered in this world ; in the very same sense, that the righteous are said to be taken away from the evil to come, Esai. lvii. 1, 2. “ The righteous is taken away from the evil to come, he shall enter into peace : they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness ;” that is, enjoying the comfort of his integrity and sincerity towards God.

And now the main difficulty being over, we shall need to trouble ourselves the less about the other expressions in the text : yet there are two which I shall a little explain to you.

1. What is here meant by “ dying in the LORD.” And this sort of phrase, in the LORD, in CHRIST, and in the name of CHRIST, is used in scripture very variously. In general it signifies, the doing or suffering any thing, with relation to CHRIST, and upon his account ; and so “ to die in the LORD,” doth most frequently signify, to die in the faith of CHRIST, and the profession of the christian religion. Sometimes it signifies to die for his cause, and to bear testimony to his truth, which is therefore called martyrdom, as St. Paul is said to be *δεσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ*, Eph. iv. 1. “ A prisoner in the LORD ;” that is, for his cause. So likewise, St. Peter ; “ If ye be reproached ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, in the name of CHRIST ; “ happy are ye :” and it is probable, that the expression, 1 Cor. xv. 18. “ Then they also which are fallen asleep in CHRIST ;” is to be understood, of those that died for his cause ; because it follows immediately, “ if in this life only we have hope in
“ CHRIST,

“CHRIST, we are of all men most miserable;” that is, considering how much Christians suffered for him in this life, they were in a most miserable condition, if there were nothing to be expected beyond it; but especially, if we consider the parallel phrase, 1 Theff. iv. 14. “So them also that sleep in JESUS,” διὰ τῆς Ἰησοῦ, for JESUS sake; that is, them that have suffered martyrdom for him, “will God bring with him.” And in this sense, many understand the phrase in the text, as spoken of martyrs; “blessed are the dead, which die in the LORD;” that is, for his cause. And though I think the phrase may well enough be understood more generally, yet I shall not reject this sense: because it is not unsuitable to the scope and occasion of the words. For considering that last and extreme persecution which he had described; it was not altogether improper to pronounce those happy, that had suffered martyrdom already, and were taken away from those dreadful calamities, which in these last days of antichrist were to fall upon the faithful servants of CHRIST.

The other expression is the last in the text, “and their works do follow them.” So we render the word ἀκολουθεῖν, which yet does most properly signify to accompany, or go along with one; and so indeed the expression will rather be more emphatical, “they rest from their labours, and their works accompany them.” But whether the word be rendered, to follow, or, to accompany, the difference is not very material.

Thus you see what the particular sense and meaning of the words probably is, to declare the happy estate of those saints or martyrs, who were already dead, in and for the faith of CHRIST, and should
not

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not live to see those cruel and fearful sufferings, which should afterwards come upon the Christians. But then this is grounded upon that general truth, that "they are happy that die in the LORD." And this is that which I intend now to prosecute, abstracting from the particular occasion, upon which these words were spoken; which brings me to the

Second thing I propounded, and chiefly designed to handle upon the occasion of this day; namely, the happy estate of good men after they have departed out of this life. And in speaking to this, I shall confine myself to two particulars, which the text mentions, as the reasons and grounds, why "they that die in the LORD," are declared to be in so blessed a condition; "Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

1. Good men, when they are departed this life, are freed from all the labours and pains they were exercised with in this world: "that they may rest from their labours."

2. They reap the comfort and reward of all the good which they have done in this world: "and their works do follow them," or rather, go along with them, to receive the reward which GOD hath promised to "them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality."

1. Those "who die in the LORD," are freed from the evils and miseries of this life. And this is so great a felicity, that some (and those who think themselves no small philosophers) have placed the chief happiness of man in freedom from pain and trouble. But though happiness do not consist in this alone; yet it cannot be denied to be a great part of it: for

though some have been so phantastically obstinate, as, against the reason and common sense of mankind, to maintain this paradox, that a wise man may be as happy upon the rack, or in Phalaris his bull, as in the greatest ease and freedom from pain that can be imagined; yet nature cries shame of this hypocrisy; and there are none of those wise men they speak of, were ever such fools as to try the experiment, and to shew by their actions, that it was indifferent to them, whether they laid themselves down upon their beds every night, or were stretch'd upon a rack; which yet ought to have been indifferent to them, had they believed themselves, and really esteemed that, which others account pain, to be as happy a condition, as that which is commonly called ease.

But we need not trouble ourselves to confute so stupid a principle, which is confuted by nature, and by every man's sense and experience. I think we may take it for granted, that freedom from misery is a very considerable part of happiness; otherwise heaven and hell, if we consider only the torment of each, would be all one. But certainly it is no small encouragement of religion, to the common sense of mankind, that it promiseth to us in the next life, a freedom from all the evils and troubles of this. And by this the happiness of heaven is frequently described to us in scripture, Esai. lvii. 2. speaking of the righteous man; "he shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds," 2 Thes. i. 7. where the apostle speaking of the reward of those, who should suffer persecution for religion. "It is a righteous thing with GOD, (says he) to recompense to you, who are troubled, rest with us, when the LORD JESUS shall be revealed from heaven with his
"mighty

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“mighty angels.” And the apostle to the Hebrews frequently describes the happiness of Christians by “entering into rest.” And Rev. xxi. the state of the new Jerusalem is set forth to us, deliverance from those troubles and sorrows, which men are subject to in this world; “and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are past away.”

Thus it is with us in this world, we are liable to sorrow and pain and death: but when we are got to heaven, none of these things shall approach us. “The former things are past away,” that is, the evils we formerly endured, are past and over, and shall never return to afflict us any more.

And is not this a great comfort, when we are labouring under the evils of this life, and conflicting sorely with the miseries of it; that we shall one day be past all these, and find a safe refuge and retreat from all these storms and tempests: when we are loaded with afflictions, and even tired with the burden of them, and ready to faint and sink under them, to think that “there remains a rest for us, in which we shall shortly enter?” How can it choose but be a mighty consolation to us, whilst we are in this “vale of tears and troubles,” to be assured that the time is coming, when “God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow nor crying?”

There are none of us, but are obnoxious to some of the evils of this life; we feel some of them, and we fear more: our outward condition, it may be, is uncomfortable, we are poor and persecuted; we are destitute of friends, or have many enemies; we are despo

despoiled of many of those comforts and enjoyments which we once had : our bodies perhaps are in pain, or our spirits troubled ; or though we have no real cause of outward trouble, yet our souls are ill lodged, in the dark dungeon of a body ; over-powered with a melancholy humour, which keeps out all light and comfort from our minds.

And is it no reviving to us, to think of that happy hour, when we shall find a remedy and redress of all these evils at once ? Of that blessed place, where we shall take sanctuary, from all those afflictions and troubles which pursued us in this world ? Where sorrow, and misery, and death are perfect strangers, and into which nothing that can render men in the least unhappy, can ever enter ? Where our souls shall be in perfect rest and contentment, and our bodies after a while shall be restored and reunited to our souls ; not to cloud and clog them as they do here, but so happily changed, and refined to such a perfection, that they shall be so far from giving any disturbance to our minds, that they shall mightily add to their pleasure and happiness ?

And when we are once landed in those blessed regions, what a comfort will it be to us, to stand on the shore, and look back upon those rough and dangerous seas, which we have escaped ? How pleasant to consider the manifold evils and calamities which we are freed from, and for ever secured against ? To remember our past labours and sufferings, and to be able to defy all those temptations, which were wont to assault us in this world, with so much violence, and with too much success ?

And this is the condition of the blessed spirits above. They find a perfect cessation of all afflictions

and troubles, "they rest from their labours." But this is not all: for,

2. They are not only freed from all the evils and sufferings they were exercised withal in this world; but they shall receive a plentiful reward of all the good they have done in it; "their works do accompany them." When pious souls go out of this world, they do not only leave all the evils of the world behind them; but they carry along with them all the good they have done, to reap there the comfort and reward of it. Just as, on the other hand, wicked men, when they die, leave all the good things of this world, all the pleasures and enjoyments behind them; but the guilt and remorse of their wicked lives accompany them, and stick close to them, to torment them there, and that there they may be tormented for them.

Thus the scriptures represent to us the different condition of good and bad men, Esai. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. "Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." Which is many times true in this world; but however that happen, will most certainly and remarkably be made good in the other. And this is most emphatically express'd to us, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 25. where the rich man petitions Abraham for some ease, and Abraham returns him this answer; "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." What a change was here! How comfortable to the one, and how

how dismal to the other ! Lazarus found rest from all his labours and sufferings, and his piety and patience accompanied him into the other world, and conveyed him into Abraham's bosom. Whereas the rich man was parted from all his good things, and the guilt of his sins went along with him, and lodged him in the place of torment.

But my text confines me to the bright side of this prospect ; the consideration of that glorious recompence which good men shall receive, for the good works which they have done in this world. Indeed the text doth not expressly say, that their works shall be rewarded, but that " they shall go along with them," and that they are blessed upon this account ; and this implies that they shall receive a sure reward. For as the apostle reasons, " God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labour of love. Verily there is a reward for the righteous," as sure as " there is a God that judgeth in the earth."

But how great and glorious that shall be, I am not in any measure able to declare to you. It may suffice, that the scripture hath assured us in general, that God is the rewarder of good men, and that he will make them happy, not according to what can now enter into our narrow thoughts, but " according to the exceeding greatness of his power" and goodness. If we are to receive our reward from God, we need not doubt, but it will be very large, and such as is every way worthy of him to bestow. For he is a great king, and of great goodness ; and we may safely refer ourselves to him, in confidence that he will consider us, not according to the meanness of our service, but according to the vastness of his treasures, and the infinite bounty of his mind. If

he hath promised to make us happy, though he hath not particularly declared to us, wherein this happiness shall consist; yet we may trust him that made us, to find out ways to make us happy; and may believe, that he who made us without our knowledge or desire, is able to make us happy beyond them both.

Only for the greater encouragement of our holiness and obedience, though he hath promised to reward every good man, far beyond the proportion of any good he hath or can do; yet he hath declared, that these rewards shall be proportionably greater or less, according to the degree of every man's piety and virtue. So our SAVIOUR tells us, that "they who are persecuted for righteousness sake, great shall be their reward in heaven," Matt. v. 12. That there will be a difference between the reward of a righteous man, and a prophet; that is, of one who is more publickly and eminently useful for the salvation of others. And among those who are teachers of others, they that are more industrious, and consequently more likely to be successful in this work, shall have a more glorious reward; as we are told by the angel, Dan. xii. 3. "And they that are wise," (or as it is in the margin rendered, "they that be teachers) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." So likewise we find in the parable of the talents, that he that improved his talent to ten, was made ruler over ten cities. And St. Paul, 2 Cor. ix. 6. speaking of the degrees of mens charity and liberality towards the poor, says expressly, "he that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth

" boun-

“ bountifully, shall reap bountifully ;” which by proportion of reason may be extended to the exercise of all other graces and virtues, 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. The apostle there represents the different degrees of glory, which good men shall be invested with at the resurrection, by the different glory and splendor of the heavenly luminaries. “ There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another glory of the stars ; for one star differeth from another star in glory : so also is the resurrection of the dead.” So that the more any man suffers for God, and the more patiently he suffers, the more holily and virtuously, the more charitably and usefully he lives in this world ; the more good works will accompany him into the next, and the greater and more glorious reward he may hope to receive there ; which as the apostle reasons (in the conclusion of that chapter, concerning the doctrine of the resurrection) ought to be a mighty encouragement to every one of us, not only to be “ stedfast and unmoveable” (that is, fixed and resolute in the profession and practice of our religion) but “ abounding likewise in the work of the LORD ; forasmuch as we know, that our labour is not in vain in the LORD.”

Every degree of diligence and industry, in the work and service of God, will most certainly one day turn to a happy account. “ Having therefore such promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” The more perfectly holy we are here on earth ; the more perfectly happy we shall be in heaven, and continue so to all eternity.

I have

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I have now done with the two reasons, which are here given in the text, of the happiness that good men, such as "die in the LORD," shall be made partakers of in another life; because "they rest from their labours, and their works accompany them;" they are freed from all the evils which they suffered, and shall receive the reward of all the good they have done in this life.

I should now have proceeded to make some inferences from this discourse; but those I will reserve for another discourse on this subject.

All that I shall add at present, as the application of what I have already said, is, that this should stir us up to a careful and zealous imitation of those blessed persons described in the text, "who are dead in the LORD, and are at rest from their labours, and whose works do accompany them." Let us imitate them, in their faith and patience, in their piety and good works, and in their constancy to God, and his truth, which was dearer to them than their lives.

Thus their virtues and sufferings are described in the visions of this book, chap. xiii. 10. "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints;" and chap. xiv. 12. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus;" and chap. xii. 11. "And they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

In this way, and by these steps, all the saints and martyrs of all ages, have ascended up to heaven, and attained to that blessed state, which they are now possessed of, after all the evils which they suffered

in this world. "They are now at rest from their labours," and all the good works which they have done, "are gone along with them," and they are now, and shall for ever be, receiving the comfort and reward of them. And if we tread in their steps, by a zealous imitation of the piety and holiness of their lives, and of the constancy and patience of their sufferings; we shall one day be translated into their blessed society, and made partakers with them of the same glorious reward. If we "have our fruit unto holiness;" our end shall be "everlasting life." If we "be faithful unto death;" shall receive a crown of life."

Let us then, as the apostle to the Hebrews exhorts, chap. vi. 11, 12. "Every one of us shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope, unto the end: and let us not be slothful; but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

"Now the GOD of peace, who brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good word and work, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight."

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The blessedness of good men, after death.

R E V. XIV. 13.

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do follow them.

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The
second
sermon on
this text.

IN my explication of these words I told you, that they are, in the general sense and meaning of them, a solemn declaration of the blessed estate of good men after this life ; but delivered upon a special occasion, as is signified by that expression, “ from henceforth ;” that is, from the time of that vision, in which was represented to St. John, the last and extremest persecution of the faithful servants of CHRIST, and which should precede the fatal downfall of Babylon ; from that time, “ blessed are the dead which die in the LORD ;” that is, considering the extremity, and the cruel circumstances of this last and severest persecution, we may, from that time forward,” reckon those who are already dead (supposing that they “ died in the LORD”) to be very happy ; in that they do not live to see and suffer those grievous things, which then will befall the faithful servants of God.

In my former discourse, I considered the words according to the general intention of them, abstract

ng from the particular occasion, upon which they were spoken, endeavouring to set forth the happy estate of good men after this life, from the two reasons and grounds mentioned in the text, namely, because "they rest from their labours," and because "their works do follow," or accompany and go along with "them;" which two particulars constitute the happiness of the future state.

That which farther remains, and to which I now proceed, is to make some inferences from what I have said upon this sub^jct. And in doing this, I shall have an eye on the special occasion of the words, as well as on their general intention. And the inferences shall be these following:

First, If those that "die in the LORD" are "at rest from their labours" and pains; then the text concludes directly against the feigned purgatory of the church of Rome, which supposeth a great number of those that "die in the LORD;" and have "obtained eternal redemption" by him from hell, not to pass immediately into happiness; but to be detain'd in the suburbs of hell, in great pain and torment, till their souls be purged, and the debt of temporary punishment, to which they are liable, be some way or other paid off and discharged.

Secondly, Here is a mighty encouragement to piety and virtue, to consider, that all the good we do in this world will accompany us into the other.

Thirdly, It is a great encouragement to patience under the sufferings and persecutions which attend good men in this world; that how heavy and grievous soever they are at present, they will end with this life, and we shall then "rest from all our labours."

Fourthly, The consideration of the extreme sufferings of Christians in the last times, and which per-

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haps are not far from us, should render us very indifferent to life, and all the enjoyments of it, so as even to esteem it a particular grace and favour of God, to be "taken away from the evil to come," and by death to prevent (if he sees it good) those extremities of sufferings, which seem to be hastening upon the world.

I. If those "that die in the LORD are at rest from "all their labours" and pains; then this text concludes directly against the feigned purgatory of the church of Rome, which supposeth a great number, yea the far greatest part of those "that die in the "LORD," and have "obtained eternal redemption" by him from hell, not to pass immediately into happiness, but to be detained somewhere (they are not certain where, but most probably in the suburbs of hell) in great pain and torment, equal in degree to that of hell, and differing only in duration; I say, to be detained there, till their souls be purged from the defilements they have contracted in this world, and the debt of temporary punishments, to which they are liable, be some way or other paid off and discharged.

They suppose indeed some very few holy men to be so perfect at their departure out of this life, that they do immediately, and without any stop, pass into heaven, because they need no purgation; and those likewise who suffer martyrdom, because they discharge their debt of temporary punishments here: but the generality of Christians "who die in the "LORD," they suppose so imperfect, as to stand in need of being purged by fire, and accordingly that they are detained a longer or shorter time, as their debt of temporary punishments is greater or less.

And indeed they have a very considerable and substantial reason, to exempt as few as possibly they can from going to purgatory ; because the more they put in fear of going thither, the market of indulgencies riseth the hither, and the profit thence accruing to the pope's coffers ; and the more and greater legacies will be left to the priests, to hire their saying of masses, for the delivery of souls out of the place of torments : for though the prayers of friends and relations will contribute something to this ; yet nothing does the business so effectually, as the masses and prayers of priests to that end.

But how is it then that St. John says, that those " that die in the LORD are happy," because " they rest from their labours ;" if so be, the far greatest part of those " who die in the LORD," are so far from " resting from their labours," that they enter into far greater pains and torments, than ever they endured in this world ? And therefore Bellarmine, that their doctrine of purgatory may receive no prejudice from this text, would have " from henceforth," in the text, to be dated from the day of judgment ; when he supposeth the pains of purgatory will be at an end. But why, " from henceforth," should take date from the day of judgment, he can give no reason, but only to save purgatory from being condemned by this text. For St. John plainly speaks of the happiness of those that should die after that time, (whatever it be) which he there describes ; but that time cannot be the day of judgment, because none shall die after that time. Just thus Estius (one of their most learned commentators) deals with another text, which by the generality of their writers is urged as a plain proof of purgatory ; " he shall be saved, yet so as

“ by fire:” upon which he says, it is sufficient that there is nothing in this text against purgatory. Sufficient, for what? not to prove purgatory, as they generally pretend from this text; but to save it harmless from it; as if we had pretended that this text makes against it.

But there are others that make against it with a witness. Not only the perpetual silence of scripture about it, when there are so many fair occasions of speaking of it; as in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where the future state is so particularly described, and yet no mention made, nor the least intimation given of this third state: but besides the silence of scripture about it, there are several passages utterly inconsistent with it; as namely, St. Paul's discourse in the beginning of the fifth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, where he plainly declares the assurance he had, that all sincere Christians, so soon as they quit the body, do pass into happiness: “ For we know, (says he) that if our “ earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved; “ we have a building of God, a house not made “ with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The plain meaning of which is, that so soon as we quit the one, we shall pass into the other. And this consideration, he tells us, made Christians weary of this world, and willing to die; ver. 2. “ For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house, “ which is from heaven;” and ver. 4. “ For we “ that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.” But had Christians believed, that the greatest part of them, when they left the body, were to go into purgatory, to be terribly tormented there; they would not have been in such haste to die; but would have protracted the time as long as they could,

and

and have contentedly born the burden of this earthly tabernacle, rather than to quit it, for a condition a thousand times more intolerable. But St. Paul expressly says, that Christians knew the contrary, and that as soon as ever they went out of the body, they should be happy, and with the LORD; and that this gave them courage against the fears of death; ver. 6. "Therefore we are always confident, *ἡμεῖς ἐν πάντοτε, bono igitur animo sumus*; "Therefore we are always of good courage, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the LORD." And ver. 8. "We are of good courage, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the LORD." The plain sense of which is, that Christians were willing rather to die than to live; because they knew, that so soon as they left the body, and departed this life, they should "be present with the LORD." But now if the doctrine of purgatory be true, this whole reasoning of St. Paul proceeds upon a gross mistake; and therefore I am certain it is not true: and so does the voice from heaven here in the text; "Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, that they may rest from their labours:" for there is no reason to restrain this general expression, "that die in the LORD," only to the martyrs; for though they are certainly included, and perhaps primarily intended in it; yet this phrase comprehends all those "who die in the faith of CHRIST," and is most frequently so used in the new testament.

But let this suffice to have been spoken of this matter; especially since bishop Fisher, and several of their own learned writers, do so frankly acknowledge, that their doctrine of purgatory hath no sufficient ground in scripture. Other reasons I grant they have for it, which

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which make them very loth to quit it ; it is a very profitable doctrine, and therefore they have taken care to have it more abundantly confirmed, by apparitions of souls from the dead, than any other doctrine whatsoever. In short, how little soever they can say for it ; it is in vain to go about to persuade them to part with it. Demetrius the silver smith argued as well as he could for his goddess Diana, from the universal consent of the world in the worship of her ; “ the great goddess Diana, whom all Asia and “ the world worshipeth.” But his trusty argument to his workmen was, “ Sirs, ye know that by this “ craft we have our wealth, and this our craft is in “ danger to be set at nought.”

II. Here is a mighty encouragement to piety and virtue, to consider that all the good we do in this world will accompany us into the other. “ Blessed “ are the dead which die in the LORD ; for their “ works accompany them.”

When we come to die, we can call nothing our own but the good works which by the grace of God we have been enabled to do in this life. These will stick by us, and bear us company into the other world, when we shall be stript of all other things, and forced to part from them, whether we will or no. Our riches and our honours, our sensual pleasures and delights, will all take their leave of us, when we leave this world ; nay, many times they do not accompany us so far as the grave, but leave us very unkindly and unseasonably, when we have the greatest need and use of them.

There is one way indeed, whereby we may secure our riches, and make sure friends to ourselves of them ; by laying them out in charity. By this means we may send them before us, and consign them

them over to another world, to make way for our reception there. So our LORD assures us, Luke xii.

33. that "by giving alms we provide ourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not;" and Luke xvi. 9. that by this way we may "make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations." The mammon of unrighteousness, what is that? It is what the scripture elsewhere calls deceitful riches; because in other ways, in which men commonly lay them out, they turn to no certain account, but one way or other do deceive and frustrate our expectation: by disposing of them in charity, to the relief of the poor and persecuted, we make sure friends of them, and consign the effects of them to our certain benefit and advantage in another world.

And as charity, so likewise all other graces and virtues are that good part which cannot be taken away from us. All the good actions that we do in this life, will go with us to the grave, and bear us company into the other world, and will stand by us, when we come to appear before our judge, and through the merits of our blessed SAVIOUR will procure for us, at the hands of a gracious and merciful GOD, a most ample and eternal reward.

And what an encouragement is this to holiness and virtue, to consider that it will be all our own another day, and turn to our unspeakable advantage at our great account! To be assured, that whoever serves God faithfully, lays up so much treasure for himself, which he may take along with him into the other world; and does provide for himself lasting comforts and faithful companions, which will never leave him nor forsake him; a happiness large as his desires, and durable and immortal as his soul!

Let

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Let us then do all the good that possibly we can, whilst we have opportunity: let us serve God industriously, and with all our might, knowing that no good action that we do shall be lost and fall to the ground, that no grace and virtue that we practise in this life, nor any degree of them, shall lose their reward. If we faithfully improve the talents, which are committed to us, to our master's advantage; when he comes to call us to an account, and finds that we have done so, we shall not fail to receive both his approbation and reward. And what a comfort will it be to any one of us, to hear those blessed words from the mouth of our LORD; "Well done" "thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been" "faithful in a little, I will make thee ruler over" "much; enter thou into the joy of thy LORD!" We shall not need to plead our services to him, and put him in mind of them: our judge himself will celebrate our good deeds upon the theatre of the world, and commemorate them to our advantage; and interpret every good office we have done, to any of his poor and afflicted members, as if it had been a kindness immediately done to himself. So our LORD represents the proceedings of the great Judge and King of the world, in the great day of recompence, Matt. xxv. 34. "Then shall the King say unto them" "on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father," "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the" "foundation of the world. For I was an hungred," "and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave" "me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:" "naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." "Then shall the righteous answer him, saying," "LORD, when saw we thee" in any of these circumstances;

“stances; hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, and in prison, and ministered unto thee?” And the king shall answer and say unto them, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” Who would not be ambitious and glad to serve such a prince, who will so benignly interpret, and so bountifully reward the least service we do to him!

III. The consideration of this should likewise be a great argument and support to our patience, under all those evils, and sufferings, and persecutions; which many times attend good men in this world. They are for the present perhaps very heavy and grievous: but there is a time shortly coming, when we shall be at ease, and perfectly freed from them; when we shall find rest from our labours and sufferings; when we shall enter into peace, and rest in our beds, every one walking in his uprightness; that is, reaping the comfort, and enjoying the reward of his sincerity towards God, and constant suffering for his cause and truth. And therefore it was well said of a good man, blessed be God that we are to die; because to good men, that is a certain remedy of all the evils of this life, and will unquestionably put an end to them. The grave is a place of rest, and discharge from all trouble, as Job elegantly describes it, chap. iii. 17, 18, 19. “There the wicked cease from troubling: there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master.”

So soon as we enter into the other world, we are secure against the pursuit and danger of all those evils which afflicted us in this world; and nothing will re-

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main but the joyful remembrance of our sufferings, and the plentiful reward of our constancy and patience under them. And the more our tribulations and persecutions have abounded, the greater will our comfort and happiness then be, " which (saith St. Paul) " is a manifest token," a clear demonstration, " of " the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be " accounted worthy of the kingdom of God, for " which ye also suffer ; seeing it is a righteous thing " with God, to recompence to you who are troubled, " rest with us, when the LORD JESUS shall be re- " vealed from heaven with his mighty angels," 2 Theff. i. 5, 6, 7.

IV. The consideration of the extreme sufferings, which are to fall upon the faithful servants of CHRIST in the last times, and which seem now to be begun in the world, should make us very contented to leave this world, and glad of any fair opportunity and excuse, to take our leave of it, and to be out of the reach and danger of those violent and more than human temptations, with which our faith and constancy may be assailed : nay, to esteem it a particular grace and favour of God to us, to be taken away from the evil to come, and to prevent (if God sees it good) those extremities of suffering which are coming upon the world.

These seem now to be begun in some part of it : they in our neighbour nation have a bitter cup put into their hands ; a cup of astonishment to all those that hear of it. Whether this be that last and extreme persecution spoken of here by St. John, I shall not pretend positively to determine. It is plainly distinguished in the visions, from that under the first beast, described Rev. xiii. from verse the first, to verse 11. And chap. xvii. there is a description of

"the beast upon which the woman sitteth, on whose
"forehead is a name written, **Mysterp, Babylon**
"the Great:" and this beast is there said to have
seven heads and ten horns, which are thus explained
by St. John, chap. xvii. 9, 10. "And here is the
"mind which hath wisdom; the seven heads are se-
"ven mountains upon which the woman sitteth; and
"there are seven kings," that is, (as is generally a-
greed by interpreters) a succession of seven govern-
ments: and verse 12, 13, 14. "And the ten horns
"which thou sawest are ten kings, which have ré-
"ceived no kingdoms as yet; but receive power as
"kings one hour with the beast. These have one
"mind, and shall give their power and strength un-
"to the beast; and shall make war with the lamb."
And verse 18. "And the woman which thou saw-
"est, is that great city which reigneth over the kings
"of the earth."

So that this beast is plainly the Roman empire;
and the woman that sitteth upon her, is the great city
standing upon seven mountains, which reigneth over
the kings of the earth; which can be no other than
Rome, as is agreed by interpreters on all sides. Bel-
larmino (l. 2. c. 2. de Rom. Pontif.) confesseth that
St. John in the Revelations every where calleth Rome,
Babylon, as Tertullian (saith he) hath noted, and as
is plain from chap. xvii. where Babylon is said to be
seated on seven mountains, and to have dominion
over the kings of the earth: there being no other
city than Rome, which in the time of St. John had
dominion over the kings of the earth; and that
Rome was built upon seven hills is famous. Thus
much Bellarmine acknowledgeth, constrained by the
force of truth; and for another small reason; name-
ly, because St. Peter writes his first epistle from Ba-
bylon,

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bylon, by which if Rome be not meant, they have no proof from scripture, that St. Peter was ever there.

Indeed they of the church of Rome would have it to be only Rome pagan. But that cannot be; because this beast, after his last head was wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed, had power given him to continue two and forty months, or (as it is elsewhere expressed,) 1260 days; that is, in the prophetick stile, so many years; and likewise because it was not to begin till the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire upon it's dissolution was divided, were set up; which was not till after the western empire was overthrown and destroyed by the Goths and Vandals. And lastly, because this is that Rome or Babylon, which should finally be destroyed, and cast as a millstone into the bottom of the sea, never to rise again; which is yet to come. And of this beast it is said, that he should "make war with the saints, and overcome them." chap. xiii. ver. 7. that is, that he should raise a long and great persecution against them, which should try their faith and patience; ver. 10. "Here is the patience, and the faith of the saints." The beast then with ten horns, must be Rome, governing the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire was broken; and this can be nothing else but Rome papal, to which the ten kings are said to give their power, and to which they were in a most servile manner subject for several ages, as is plain from history.

And to confirm this, it is very observable, that the ancient fathers generally agree, that "that which hindered the revealing of the wicked one," (spoken of by St. Paul, 2 Theff. ii. 7, 8.) was the Roman empire; and that being removed, the man of sin or antichrist

antichrist was to succeed in it's room. I shall produce a few testimonies to this purpose, but very remarkable ones. Tertullian expounding what St. Paul means, by him that withholdeth or letteth, hath these words, *Quis, nisi Romanus status*, &c? Who is that, but the Roman state, which being broken into ten kings, shall bring on antichrist? And then "the wicked one shall be revealed." And in his apology he gives this reason, why the Christians should pray for the Roman emperors, and the whole state of the empire; because the greatest mischief hanging over the world, is hindered by the continuance of it. St. Chrysostom speaking of that which hinders the revelation of the man of sin; this (says he) can be no other, than the Roman empire: for as long as that stands, he dares not shew himself; but upon the vacancy or ceasing of that, he shall assume to himself both the power of God and man. St. Austin, in his book *de Civit. Dei*, no man (says he) doubts, but that the successor to the Roman emperor in Rome shall be the man of sin; and we know who hath succeeded him.

But now after this, another beast is represented coming out of the earth; not succeeding in the place of the first beast, but appearing during his continuance, ver. 12. and he hath these remarkable characters, by which he may be known.

1. He is said to have but two horns; by which, according to the interpretation of the ten horns, signifying the ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire after it's dissolution should be divided, we are in all reason to understand two of these kingdoms, of which this beast, whoever he be, shall be possessed.

2. He

2. He is said to be like a lamb, but to speak like a dragon; that is, to pretend and make a shew of great lenity and mildness, in his proceedings; but that really he shall be very cruel. It shall be pretended, that he does all without violence, and without arms; but he shall speak as a dragon, that is, in truth shall exercise great force and cruelty; either alluding to the cruelty of the dragon, literally so called; or perhaps prophetically pointing at a particular sort of armed soldiers, called by that name of dragons, or, as we according to the French pronunciation call them, dragoons.

3. He shall arise during the continuance of the first beast, and engage in his cause; but the first beast shall only stand by and look on, ver. 12. "and he exerciseth all the power of the first beast, before him, and causeth the earth and them that dwell therein, to worship the beast, whose deadly wound was healed;" plainly declaring that this persecution should not immediately arise from the first beast, which is said to come out of the sea, which in this prophecy denotes the state ecclesiastical; but from the second beast, which comes out of the earth, and denotes the temporal power. But yet all this ought to be acted in the sight of the first beast, and in his behalf, to compel men to worship him.

4. That he shall be remarkable for causing fire to come down from heaven to earth, in a wonderful manner, to the great terror and amazement of men; ver. 13. "And he doth great wonders; so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men."

5. That he would interdict all those, who would not worship the beast, all commerce with human society,

ciety, the exercise of civil trades and professions ; ver. 17. “ And he causeth, that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast.”

6. And lastly (which seems to be the most peculiar and characteristical note of all the rest,) that his number should be 666, that is, (as most of the ancients understand it,) that the numeral letters of a certain word or name, should, being computed, amount to that number. And it is expressly said to be “ the number of a man.” ver. 18. “ Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast ; for it is the number of a man.” And in the verse before, it is said to be “ the number of his name.”

Now to whom all these characters do agree, and especially the last, concerning the “ number of his name,” I shall not presume to conjecture ; much less positively to determine, whether he be now in being ; because it is said to require a particular wisdom and understanding to find it out. “ Here is wisdom ; let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast.” However the event, when the thing is fully accomplished, will clearly discover it. Thus much is certain, that this extreme persecution, whenever it shall be, will forerun the final destruction of Babylon, which will not then be far off. And concerning this it is that St. John speaks, chap. xiv. 12. when he says, “ Here is the patience of the saints, here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” And then he immediately adds, as it is in the text, “ and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the LORD, from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours ; and their works do accompany them.” Thus much may suffice to have been spoken on this text.

S E R-

Preached
on All-
Saints day.

S E R M O N LXXXI.

The vanity and wickedness of honouring dead saints, and persecuting the living.

LUKE XI. 49, 50, 51.

Therefore also said the wisdom of GOD, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.

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THE latter part of this chapter is a very sharp, but just invective, made by our SAVIOUR against the hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees, of which he gives many instances; and this among the rest for one, that they pretended a great honour and respect for the righteous men, and prophets of former ages, whom their fathers had persecuted and slain; but yet were of the same spirit and temper, and as ready to persecute good men, as their fathers were. They raised indeed stately monuments to the memory of those saints and martyrs, and adorned them with great art and cost, and it is likely made a great shew of esteem and veneration for them: but all this while they were of the same disposition with

with their fathers, and bare the same implacable hatred and malice against the prophets and righteous men who then lived among them, (yea against that great prophet, whom GOD had sent into the world, JESUS the Son of GOD,) which their fathers did against the good men of their times. And though they disclaimed the wickedness and cruelty of their fathers, with never so much zeal and vehemency; yet for all that, they were ready to do the same things. Now this was so gross and odious a piece of hypocrisy in them, that our SAVIOUR doth with great reason denounce so severe a woe against them: "Woe unto you; for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness, that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres." And then it follows; "therefore also said the wisdom of GOD, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple."

There are considerable difficulties in both these passages. As to the former, "Wo unto you; for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness, that ye allow the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres." The force of this reasoning is at first sight not easy to be discerned; and therefore expositors have gone several ways to explain it.

Some comparing this with the parallel places in St. Matthew's gospel (chap. xxiii. 29.) will not have our

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SAVIOUR to mean, that by building the sepulchres of the prophets they expressed their approbation of their fathers killing them. They did indeed testify by their usage of the righteous men that lived amongst themselves, that they were of the very same temper and spirit, which their fathers had been of; and that they would have done just as their fathers did, if they had been in the same circumstances with their fathers; so that they were witnesses to themselves (as it is in St. Matthew) “that they were children of them which killed the prophets;” they owned themselves their children by descent, and their actions witnessed that they were their children also in resemblance; nay, (as it is there farther intimated) they seemed resolved “to fill up the measure of their fathers:” though all this while they pretended not to approve their fathers behaviour; and therefore whilst they were “building the tombs of the prophets, and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous, they said, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.” And the interpreters that go this way do accordingly render these words of St. Luke; not as they are in our translation, “ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers:” but, ye bear witness, and ye allow (or, are well pleased with) the deeds of your fathers; that is, ye own that they were your fathers, who did these things; and though ye do not in words allow what they did, yet your inward tempers and dispositions (whether you know it or no) are the very same with theirs, which you too plainly testify by your actions; so that when “you build the sepulchres of the prophets,” you only expose the deceitfulness and hypocrisy of your hearts, your pretences and your actions directly contradicting

tradicting each other. Thus some expositors give the sense of this passage.

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But others think that our SAVIOUR intended somewhat more, in St. Luke, namely to retort upon them the honour which they seemed to do to the prophets, in building their sepulchres, as an argument that they rejoiced in their death; seeing they were so well content to be at the charge of a monument for them; like Herod who, when he had murdered Aristobulus, made a magnificent funeral for him; or as the Roman historians say of Caracalla, though he hated all good men, whilst they were alive, yet he would pretend to honour them, when they were dead. This some think our SAVIOUR intended in these words, “truly ye bear witness, that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres;” as if he had said, hereby ye testify, that ye allow and like very well what your fathers did to the prophets. According to which latter exposition, there seems to be more force and greater sharpness in our SAVIOUR’s reproof; as not only charging them with the ill usage of the righteous men of their own times; but moreover making them, by their building the tombs, and garnishing the sepulchres of the ancient prophets, to become as it were accessories to the murder of them.

But leaving this digression, I now proceed to that which I primarily intended, namely, first, to explain the following words, which I have chosen as my present subject, and then to make some observations upon them.

“Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute; that the blood

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“ of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, to the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation.”

There are three considerable difficulties in the words, which I shall endeavour to explain to you.

I. What is here meant by “ the wisdom of God.”

II. Who this Zacharias was, here mentioned by our SAVIOUR; “ from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar and the temple.”

III. In what sense, and with what reason and justice it is here threatned, “ that the blood of all the prophets and righteous men, shed from the foundation of the world, should be required of that generation.”

I. What is here meant by the wisdom of God. “ Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, &c.” In St. Matthew our SAVIOUR speaks this in his own name, “ wherefore behold, I send unto you prophets:” for which reason some think, that by “ the wisdom of God,” our SAVIOUR here designed himself; as if he had said, therefore I, who am the wisdom of God, declare unto you. But this is not very probable, our SAVIOUR no where else in the gospel speaking of himself in any such style, though St. Paul calls him “ the power of God,” and “ the wisdom of God.” Others think that our SAVIOUR here refers to some prophecy of the old testament, to this purpose; “ therefore the wisdom of God hath said,” that is, the holy Spirit of wisdom, which inspired the prophets in the old testament.

ment. But this conceit is utterly without ground; for we find no such passage, nor any thing to that sense, in any of the prophets of the old testament.

But the most plain and simple interpretation is this, "therefore hath the wisdom of God said," that is, the most wise God hath determined to send among you such messengers and holy men, and I foresee that ye will thus abuse them, and thereby bring wrath and destruction upon your selves. And whereas our SAVIOUR says in St. Matthew, "behold I send unto you prophets;" it is very probable, he speaks in GOD's name, and that it is to be understood, "behold, says God, I send unto you." And this phrase of the wisdom of God, for the most wise God is very agreeable to other forms of speech, which we meet with in the jewish writers; as, *dicit norma judicii*, "the rule of judgment says," that is, the most just and righteous God; which serves very well to explain the phrase in the text, "therefore saith the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles."

By apostles is here meant all sorts of divine messengers: for so St. Matthew expresseth it, "I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes;" that is, several holy and excellent men, endowed with all sorts of divine gifts; "prophets, and wise men, and scribes," which were the most glorious and admired titles among the Jews.

"And some of them they shall slay and persecute." St. Matthew expresseth it more particularly, "some of them ye shall kill and crucify;" as it was afterwards fulfilled in the two James's, and Stephen, who were slain by them, and in Simon the son of Cleophas, and before him in "JESUS the son of God," who were crucified: and "some of them
" ye

SERM. "ye shall scourge in your synagogues," as we read
 LXXXI. they did to Petter and John; and "persecute them
 "from city to city," as they did Paul and Barnabas. The sending of these messengers of God among the Jews, and this ill usage of them, the all-wise and all-knowing God had determined and foreseen.

II. Who this Zacharias was, here mentioned by our SAVIOUR. And there are so many of them (no less than four of this name) to whom it may with some probability be applied, but especially to two of them, that it is very hard to determine which of them our SAVIOUR means. Three Zacharias's are mention'd in scripture, and one more in the history of Josephus.

There was Zacharias the father of John the Baptist; but whose son he was, we do not read; and though of his death the scripture is silent, yet there are two traditions about it; one that he was slain by Herod's officers, because he would not tell where his son, John the Baptist was, when Herod sent for him. But the credit of this relies upon very doubtful authors. The other is mentioned by several of the fathers, and the substance of it is briefly this; that there being a place in the temple, where the virgins by themselves used to pray, the virgin Mary coming to that place to pray among the virgins, was forbidden, because she had had a child: and that Zacharias for maintaining her virginity, was set upon, "and killed "between the temple and the altar." But this tradition is rejected by St. Jerome; and I doubt there is little ground for it.

Zacharias, one of the lesser prophets, was "the "son of Barachias," which agrees so far with St. Matthew's description of him: but there is no mention in scripture that he was slain; nor could he well
 be

be in the temple, which was but building in his time ; though the author of the targum says, that Zacharias the son of Ido, was slain by the Jews in the house of the LORD's sanctuary, on the day of the propitiation ; because he admonished them not to do evil before the LORD. Now Zacharias the son of Barachias, was the grandson of Ido ; but yet, I think, this was only lapse of memory, and that he means Zachary in the Chronicles, who was slain by Joash.

And he is the third Zacharias I mention'd, 2 Chr. xxiv. 21. who as he was reproving the people " for " transgressing the commandment of the LORD, was " stoned with stones at the commandment of the " king, in the court of the house of the LORD." And this our SAVIOUR seems more particularly to reflect upon, immediately after the text ; " O Je- " rusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets," &c. Now this one would think was certainly the person intended by our SAVIOUR, and fit to be mentioned with Abel, " whose blood" is said " to have " cried to the LORD." For of Zacharias it is likewise said, that " when he died, he said, the LORD " look upon it, and require it." And Drusius cites a Jewish writer, speaking thus by way of complaint against the Jewish nation ; " because in the " midst of thee fell the priests of the LORD, and his " prophets, and because before the holy temple in " the midst of thee, was slain the godly and righteous prophet Zacharias, who lay unburied, nor did " the earth cover his blood, but to this day it goes " up and speaks in the midst of thee." So that none could have been more fit to have been joined with Abel in this respect.

But

But as probable as this looks, there are two very great objections against it. One is, that St. Matthew calls the Zacharias spoken of by our SAVIOUR the son of Barachias; whereas this Zacharias slain by Joash, was the son of Jehoiada: and though it be very considerable, which St. Jerome observes, that in the Hebrew, or Nazarene gospel, it is Zacharias the son of Jehoiada; yet it is hard to rely upon that against all the Greek copies. But a more difficult objection, in my opinion, is, that our SAVIOUR seems to design to mention the two extremes, the first and last righteous man that was slain, and between them two comprehended the good men of all ages, that were persecuted and slain; and if so, then that Zacharias in the Chronicles, who was slain so long before, can by no means be the person.

There is yet a fourth Zacharias, mentioned by Josephus, lib. 4. the son of Baruch (which is probably enough the same name with Barachias) who was the last remarkable good man that was slain, immediately before the siege of Jerusalem; and that as Josephus tells us, in the midst of the temple; which agrees with our SAVIOUR's description of it, "between the altar and the temple;" not the altar of incense, but of burnt-offerings, which was in the outward court, before the ascent to the temple. So that Grotius thinks this was the man intended by our SAVIOUR, yet so that he does both allude to the history of the former Zacharias, and foretel the death of this. And there is but one objection against this; that our SAVIOUR speaks of this as already past "whom you have slain;" whereas this Zacharias was not slain till after our SAVIOUR's death. But I think that a satisfactory answer may be given to this (viz.) that our SAVIOUR foretelling those future perfe-

persecutions, which should fill up the measure of their sins, and bring final destruction upon them, he speaks of this as already past, because before that destruction should come upon them, it would be true, "they had slain him:" so that speaking of the vengeance coming upon them, well might he say, "that upon them should come the blood of all the righteous men, from Abel to Zacharias, whom they had slain," &c.

III. The third difficulty remains, and that is, in what sense, and with what reason and justice it is here threatned, "that the blood of all the prophets and righteous men, shed from the foundation of the world, should be required of that generation." Some understand this more strictly; they should be charged with it, and formally punish'd for it, because in imitating their cruel predecessors, they should be guilty of all their cruelty. But there is no necessity of this: all that our SAVIOUR seems to intend, is this, that their punishment, in the destruction of Jerusalem, should be so horrible, as if GOD had once for all arraigned them of all the righteous blood that ever had been shed in the world, and brought the punishment of it upon them; though in truth the punishment did not exceed the desert of their own sins. And if this be the meaning of it, there is nothing harsh and unreasonable in it. And thus I have explained, as well as I can, the several difficulties in the text. I shall make two or three observations from the main scope and design of it, and so conclude.

I. That it hath been the lot of holy and righteous men, in most ages of the world, to meet with very bad usage, to be persecuted and slain. The devil began this work early. When there were but three men in all the world, and two of them brethren; the

one slew the other, "because he was more righteous," and served God better than he did. And this trade hath continued, and been practised, more or less, in most ages and generations of the world, as might be deduced through the history of the old and new testament, and of most ages since: "though the rod of the wicked hath not always abode upon the back of the righteous," lest at last piety should be quite discouraged, and "the faithful fail from among the children of men." The people and the church of God have had many intervals of peace and prosperity; and sometimes for a long continuance, the favour and countenance of authority, and the powers of the world, and the laws of nations on their side.

But yet there is a continual "enmity between the seed of the woman, and the serpent, between the righteous and the wicked, between those that serve God, and those that serve him not;" because their ways are contrary one to another, and quite of another fashion, their principles and practices do contradict and clash with one another; the virtues of good men are a continual upbraiding of the bad, a living reproof and reproach to them; so that it is no wonder, that evil men do so violently hate and persecute the good, and do by all means endeavour to remove out of the way those who are so opposite and offensive to them.

II. We may observe likewise hence, how great a sin they are guilty of, who persecute the righteous, and how terrible a vengeance from God waits on them. Particular examples of this have been in all ages: but as the guilt of this sin never went higher, than at this time foretold by our SAVIOUR, when God sent to the Jews such "prophets, and wise-
"men,

"men, and scribes," and such a number of them, SERM. LXXXI.
as never upon any occasion were sent into the world, and they used them in that bloody and barbarous manner; no wonder, if the vengeance that came upon them was such as never had been before; and if, after they had "filled up the measure" of their sins, by "crucifying the LORD JESUS" and "persecuting his apostles," and "stoning and killing" "all the prophets" that were sent unto them, "the wrath of GOD came upon them to the utmost," and such a terrible destruction from the LORD, as never befel any people; insomuch that our SAVIOUR, upon the foresight and mention of it, forty years before it happened, could not but "weep over them," and express himself in those compassionate words, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; but ye would not! behold your house is left unto you desolate."

III. From this whole passage of our SAVIOUR, which I have been explaining to you, we may learn, how vain it is for men to pretend to honour the dead saints, when they persecute the living. This was the great hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees among the Jews in our SAVIOUR's time; and is at this day of the rulers and governors of the Roman church among us Christians; nay, they exceed the scribes and pharisees, not only in their veneration of the ancient saints and righteous men, but also, if it be possible, in their malice and cruelty towards the living. For they not only build costly monuments to their memory, which was the utmost the scribes and pharisees did, but they honour them

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them with shrines and rich offerings, with prayers and vows to them, more frequent than to Almighty God himself, and our blessed SAVIOUR: but then they hate and persecute the living, with as great violence and cruelty, as ever was used by any part of mankind towards one another. 'Tis true they do it under the notion of heresy; and so did the scribes and pharisees too, as St. Paul witnesseth, "After the way which ye call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the law and in the prophets." So they call us hereticks; though we receive and believe all that is written in the holy scriptures, only rejecting their additions, whereby they "would make the commandment of God of none effect." And as Rome is parallel with Jerusalem in many other respects; so especially in the bloody persecution of righteous men: and as Jerusalem is charged by our SAVIOUR with "the blood of all the prophets and righteous men" of all ages; so St. John in the Revelation says of Rome, that "in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth," chap. xviii. 24. Which is no less true of Rome christian, than of Rome pagan. In all the churches and religions in the world, and perhaps in Rome pagan her self, hath not so much innocent blood been shed, as in Rome christian and catholick, and that under a pretence of religion: and no doubt there is a day coming, when she shall be called to a heavy account for these things, "when the heavens shall rejoice over her, and the holy angels and prophets, because God hath avenged them on her."

SER-

S E R M O N LXXXII.

The danger of zeal, without knowledge.

Preached
on No-
vember 5.
1682.

ROM. X. 2.

*I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God ;
but not according to knowledge.*

TH E R E is nothing more commonly cried up, S E R M.
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than zeal in religion ; and yet there is nothing in which men do more frequently and fatally mistake and miscarry, and in the expressions and effects whereof men ought to govern themselves with more care and caution. To speak the truth, zeal is as all other passions are, in it's own nature indifferent, and of itself neither good nor bad ; but according to the object and degree of it : for zeal is nothing else, but “ an earnest concernment for, or “ against something, and a violent pursuit and prosecution of it.” For if it be applied to a right object, so as we be earnestly concerned for things that are unquestionably good, and against things that are unquestionably evil ; and in a due degree ; that is, if the expression of it be proportionable to the less or greater good or evil of things ; then it is a commendable quality of virtue : but if it be wrong placed, and we be earnestly concerned for that which is evil, and against that which is good, or about things which are of an indifferent, or doubtful nature, as to the good and evil of them ; or if we notoriously exceed

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exceed in the degree of it, being more zealously concerned about things, than they deserve, and zealously concerned about lesser things, to the prejudice of greater; in any of these cases, it is so far from being a virtue, that it is a vice of a most pernicious and mischievous consequence, and many times hath as bad effects, as can proceed from the worst principle or disposition of mind.

It is sometimes used in a good sense; but it is, when it is applied to the best things, in which the honour of God, and the salvation of men is concerned, to the great and unquestionable duties of religion. As zeal for the honour of God, and the place of his publick worship, in opposition to profaneness, John ii. 17. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." For an earnest desire of those gifts, whereby we are to edify the church, 1 Cor. xii. 31. "But covet earnestly the best gifts," so we render the words; "be zealous of the best gifts," so it is in the Greek. For a forwardness and readiness to relieve the necessities of the saints, 2 Cor. ix. 2. "I know the forwardness of your minds, and your zeal hath provoked very many." And to the same purpose is that expression, Tit. ii. 14. "Zealous of good works." And then for a zeal for the salvation of mens souls, 2 Cor. xi. 2. "I am zealous of you with a godly zeal."

But the word is much more frequently in scripture used in a bad sense, for a malicious and furious rage, against the professors of christianity, Acts v. 17, 18. "Then the high priest, and they that were with him, were filled with indignation," (the word is zeal) "and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in prison." And chap. xiii. 45. it is said, "the Jews were filled with zeal, and spake against those

“ those things which were spoken by Paul, contra-
“ dicting and blaspheming.” And chap. xvii. 5.
“ The Jews which believed not, moved with zeal,
“ gathered a company, and set all the city in an up-
“ roar.”

’Tis frequently reckoned amongst “ the works of
“ the flesh,” and mentioned in the company of the
greatest vices and crimes; wrath, contention, divi-
sion, sedition, murders, tumults, confusions, Rom.
xiii. 13. “ Let us walk honestly as in the day, not
“ in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and
“ zeal.” 1 Cor. iii. 3. “ Whereas there is among
“ you zeal, and strife, and divisions; are ye not
“ carnal?” 2 Cor. xii. 20. “ Left there be debates,
“ zeal, wrath, strife.” Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. “ The
“ works of the flesh are manifest,” among which
the apostle reckons “ hatred, variance, zeal, wrath,
“ strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders.”
St. James calls it a “ bitter zeal.” Jam. iii. 14, 15,
16. “ But if ye have bitter zeal and strife in your
“ hearts; glory not, and lye not against the truth.
“ This wisdom descendeth not from above; but is
“ earthly, sensual, devilish. For where zeal and
“ strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”
By which it appears that zeal most frequently goes
under a bad name and character in scripture; zeal,
I mean, in matters of religion; for of that most of
the texts I have mentioned speak; and this is that
which St. Paul means here in the text, by a zeal of
God, that is, a zeal about religion, and divine things.
“ I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God;
“ but not according to knowledge.”

In which words, the apostle being desirous to say
the best he could of his countrymen the Jews, he
commends the good meaning of their zeal, and
blames

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blames the ill conduct of it, "I bear them record," *μαρτυρῶ αὐτοῖς*, I give this testimony on their behalf, that they have a zeal of God," that is, that by all this fierceness against the christian religion, they intend the honour of God, and think they do him service: but yet this zeal is greatly to be condemned; because it is a mistaken and misguided zeal, not at all directed as it should be; "they have a zeal of God; but not according to knowledge."

From which words I shall take into consideration these three things.

I. What are the qualifications and properties of "a zeal according to knowledge."

II. By what marks and characters we may know "that zeal," which here, and elsewhere in scripture is condemned, as "not being according to knowledge."

III. How far the doing of any thing, out of "a zeal for God," doth mitigate and extenuate the evil of it. For when the apostle here testifies concerning the Jews, that they had "a zeal for God;" he speaks this in favour of them, and by way of mitigation of their faults. When I have handled these three particulars, I shall apply my discourse to the present occasion of this day.

I. What are the qualifications and properties of "a zeal according to knowledge." I shall mention these three.

1. That our zeal be right, in respect of it's object.

2. That the measure and degree of it be proportioned to the good or evil of things, about which it is conversant.

3. That we pursue it by lawful ways and means.

I. That

1. That our zeal be right, in respect of it's object ; I mean, that those things which we are zealous for, be certainly and considerably good ; and that those things which we are zealous against, be certainly and considerably evil. A mistake in any of these quite mars our zeal, and spoils the virtue of it : and though it be never so much intended for God, it is not at all pleasing and acceptable to him ; because it is a blind and ignorant and mistaken zeal : and the hotter, the worse ; it is not an heavenly fire, " that comes down from above ;" but it is like the fire of hell, heat without light. If we mistake good and evil, and be zealously concerned, against that which is good, or for that which is evil ; the greater our zeal is, the greater is our fault ; and instead of doing God and religion service and credit, we do the greatest mischief and dishonour we can to them both : or if the thing about which our zeal is conversant, be of a doubtful and uncertain nature ; this is not properly an object of zeal. Men should never be earnest for or against any thing, but upon clear and certain grounds, that what we contend so earnestly for, is undoubtedly good ; and that which we are so violent against, is undoubtedly evil : if it be not, we are zealous for we know not what, and that I am sure, is a " zeal not according to knowledge."

And if the thing be certainly good or evil, which we are so concerned about ; it must also be considerably so : otherwise it will not warrant our being zealous about it. All truth is good, and all error bad ; but there are many truths so inconsiderable, and which have so small an influence upon practice, that they do not deserve our zeal and earnest contention about them ; and so likewise are there many errors, and mistakes, of so slight and inconsiderable a nature,

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that it were better men should be let alone in them, than provoked to quarrel and contend about them.

Thus that great heat that was in the christian church, about the time of observing Easter, was, in my opinion, “a zeal not according to knowledge.” They were on both sides agreed in the main, which was to celebrate the memory of our SAVIOUR’s resurrection: but there were different customs about the time, which was a matter of no such consideration, as to deserve so much heat and zeal about it, especially considering the uncharitable, and mischievous consequences of that difference.

2. That our zeal may be according to knowledge. The measure and degree of it must be proportioned to the good or evil of things, about which it is conversant. That is an ignorant zeal, which is conversant about lesser things, and unconcerned for greater. Such was the zeal of the scribes and pharisees, who were mightily concerned about external and lesser matters; but took little or no care of inward purity, and real and substantial goodness; they were very careful, “not to eat with unwashed hands, and to “make clean the outside of the cup and platter;” but then “they were full of extortion, and all un- “righteousness: they paid tythe of mint, and anise, “and cummin; but omitted the weightier things, “judgment, mercy, and fidelity;” or, as St. Luke expresseth it, “they past over judgment and the love “of God.”

A zealous strictness about external rites and matters of difference, where there is a visible neglect of the substantial duties of religion, and the great virtues of a good life, is either a gross ignorance of the true nature of religion, or a fulsom hypocrisy. And so likewise is a loud and zealous outcry against

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rites and ceremonies, and the imposition of indifferent things in religion, when men can release themselves from the obligation of natural and moral duties, and pass over mercy, and justice, and charity.

3. A zeal that is "according to knowledge," must be pursued and prosecuted by lawful and warrantable means. No zeal for God and his glory, for his true church and religion, will justify the doing of that which is morally and in itself evil. "Will ye speak wickedly for God," and talk deceitfully "for him?" We do not know what belongs to the honour of God and religion, if we think to promote his glory, by means so dishonourable and offensive to him. The apostle pronounceth it a damnable sin, for any to charge this doctrine upon christianity, that evil may be done for a good end, and to promote the glory of God, Rom. iii. 8. "As we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, let us do evil that good may come; whose damnation is just."

And yet nothing is more frequent, than for men, out of a zeal for God and religion, to overlook the evil and unlawfulness of the means they use, for the advancing so good an end. This is that which hath sanctified those refined arts of lying and perjury, by equivocation, and mental reservation; those seditious ways of disturbing the peace of kingdoms, by treason and rebellion, by the excommunicating, and deposing of princes, upon pretence of heresy; of extirpating those, whom they please to call hereticks, by inquisitions, and *croisado's*, and massacres; and this, not only in the opinion of private persons, but in the judgment of popes, and of general councils. I proceed in the

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II. Place to shew by what marks and characters we may know the contrary zeal, that which is not according to knowledge, which is condemned here in the text, and very frequently in other places of scripture: and though this may be sufficiently known by the contrary marks and properties (which I shall but briefly mention) yet to discover it more fully, I shall add one or two more very gross and sensible signs and instances of it.

1. It is "a zeal without knowledge," that is mistaken in the proper object of it, that calls good evil, and evil good; a zeal for gross errors and superstitions, plainly contrary either to the revelation of God's word, or the light of reason, or to common sense; any or all of these cannot be "a zeal according to knowledge." A zeal for the worship of images, for praying to saints and angels, contrary to the plain law and word of God; a zeal for the sacrilegious depriving of the people of half the sacrament, contrary to our SAVIOUR's plain institution, and the acknowledged practice of the catholick church, for a thousand years; a zeal for that most absurd of all doctrines that ever was taught in any religion, I mean the doctrine of transubstantiation, not only without any sufficient authority from scripture (as is acknowledged by several of the most learned of the Roman church) but contrary to reason, and in defiance of the sense of all mankind; a zeal for these, and many more like gross errors and practices, cannot possibly be "a zeal according to knowledge."

2. That is "a zeal without knowledge," the degree whereof is manifestly disproportioned to the good or evil of things about which it is conversant; when there is in men a greater and fiercer zeal for

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the externals of religion ; than for the vital and essential parts of it : for the traditions of men ; than for the commandments of God : for bodily severities ; than for the mortification of our lusts : for the means of religion ; than for the end of it : a greater zeal against the omission and neglect of some senseless and superstitious practices ; than against the practice of the grossest immoralities : and against the deniers of the doctrines of transubstantiation, and of the pope's infallibility, an equal, if not a greater zeal (I am sure a more severe prosecution) than against those who deny our SAVIOUR to be the true Messias, and the Son of God : this certainly is not " a zeal according to knowledge." Nor,

3. That which is prosecuted by unlawful and unwarrantable means. That cannot be " a zeal of God according to knowledge," which warrants " the doing of evil, that good may come ;" the violating of truth and faith, and of the peace of human society, for the cause of the catholick church ; and breaking the eternal and immutable laws of God, for the advancing of his glory. Nor,

4. An uncharitable zeal, which is an enemy to peace and order, and thinks itself sufficiently warranted to separate from the communion of Christians, and to break the peace of the church, upon every scruple, and upon every fancy and conceit of unlawful impositions, though in the most indifferent things ; nay, upon this single point, because a thing which they acknowledge lawful, and indifferent in it self, is in the worship of God enjoined by authority ; the most unreasonable principle that I think ever was avowed among Christians ; not to do a thing, which otherwise they might do, only because it is enjoined ; and to fancy, that an indifferent thing becomes presently

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fently unlawful, because it is commanded by lawful authority ; and that it is a sin to do any thing, in the worship of GOD, which is not left to their liberty, whether they will do it or not. This is not only a zeal without knowledge ; but contrary to common sense. Nor,

5. A furious and cruel zeal, which St. James calls a bitter, or a wrathful zeal, and which tends to confusion and every evil work, which is blind with it's own rage, and makes men, as St. Paul says of himself, when he persecuted the Christians, exceedingly mad against all that differ from them, and stand in the way of their fierce and outrageous zeal.

6. And lastly, a zeal for ignorance, is most certainly not “ a zeal according to knowledge ;” and this is a zeal peculiar to the church of Rome, by such strict laws to forbid people the use of the holy scriptures in a known tongue ; nay, not so much as to allow them to understand what they do in the service of GOD ; to require them to be present at their publick prayers, and to join with them in them, without letting them know the meaning of them ; to pretend to teach them, by reading lessons to them in an unknown tongue ; and all this under pretence of increasing their devotion ; as if the less men understand of the service of GOD, the more they would be affected with it, and edified by it.

And yet there is nothing in which the church of Rome hath been more zealously concerned, than to keep the people in ignorance : nothing they have opposed with more obstinacy, against the repeated application of princes, and people, at the beginning of the reformation ; than to allow the people the use of the scriptures, and their publick prayers, in an unknown tongue. And their obstinacy in this point,

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was not without reason ; nothing being more certain, than that if the people were once brought to understand the scriptures, they would soon quit their religion, which in so many things is so directly contrary to the word of God. The

III. And last thing remains to be spoken to, viz. how far the doing of things, out of “ a zeal for God,” doth mitigate and extenuate the evil of them. For when the apostle here testifies, concerning the Jews, that they had “ a zeal of God,” he speaks this in favour of them, and by way of mitigation of their fault. “ I bear them record ;” I who was once acted by this ignorant and furious zeal, which now possesseth them, and persecuted the Christians in the same outrageous manner, as they still continue to do, and all this with a very good conscience, as I thought, and out of “ a zeal for God,” and the true religion. So he tells us, Acts xxvi. 9. “ I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary “ to the name of JESUS of Nazareth.” So that his zeal was sincere, and with a real intention to do service to God and religion ; and yet for all that was very faulty and sinful, and, if he had persisted in it, damnable ; so that his confidence, that he was in the right, and the sincerity of his zeal in acting according to the persuasion of his conscience, did not alter the nature of the actions he did out of this zeal, and make them less wicked in themselves : though it was some mitigation of the fault of the person, and rendered him more capable of the mercy of God, by repentance, than if he had done contrary to his conscience, and the clear convictions of his own mind.

And therefore the best way to understand the great evil and wickedness of this furious and blind zeal, will be, to consider the account which St. Paul, after his

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his conversion, gives of his own doings, and what load he lays upon himself, notwithstanding the sincerity of his zeal, and that he acted according to his conscience. Acts viii. and ix. you have the history at large of his outrageous doings, how he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women to prison; how he breathed out threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the LORD. Acts xxii. 4. "I persecuted, says he, this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." And ch. xxvi. 10, 11. "Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them; and I punished them often in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange cities." Gal. i. 13, 14. "Ye have heard, says he, of my conversation in times past, in the Jews religion; how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it, being exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers." 1 Tim. i. 13. "Who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious." So that he chargeth himself with the guilt of blasphemy and murder, and a most furious and outrageous persecution of good men; for which elsewhere he pronounceth himself the chief of sinners. From whence it evidently appears, that men may do the most wicked and damnable sins, out of a zeal for God.

And this was the case of many of the Jews, as our SAVIOUR foretold, that "the time should come, when they should kill them, thinking they did God good service." But yet for all this, the apostles of our LORD make no scruple, to charge them with

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downright murder. Acts ii. 23. speaking of their putting our SAVIOUR to death, "whom ye by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And Acts vii. 52. "The just one, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers."

Yet notwithstanding their sin was of this high nature in itself; it was some mitigation of the fault of the persons, that they did these things out of an ignorant zeal, and rendered them more capable of the mercy of GOD, upon their repentance. And upon this account our SAVIOUR interceded with GOD for mercy for them; "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." St. Peter also pleads the same in mitigation of their fault, Acts iii. 17. "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers." And St. Paul tells us, that he found mercy, upon his repentance, on this account, 1 Tim. i. 13. "But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief." But still, for all this, wicked things done out of conscience and zeal for GOD, are damnable, and will prove so, without repentance.

I shall now draw some inferences from this discourse, by way of application.

1. If it be so necessary, that our zeal be directed by knowledge; this shews us how dangerous a thing zeal is in the weak and ignorant sort of people. Zeal is an edge-tool, which children in understanding should not meddle withal; and yet it most frequently possesseth the weakest minds; and commonly by how much the less knowing people are, by so much the more zealous they are: and in the church of Rome, where knowledge is professedly discouraged, and suppressed in the common people, zeal is mightily countenanced and cherished. And they make great use

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of it; for this blind and furious zeal, is that which inspires them to do such cruel and barbarous things, as were hardly ever acted among the heathen. Zeal is only fit for wise men; but it is chiefly in fashion among fools.

Nay it is dangerous in the hands of wise men, and to be governed and kept in with a strict rein; otherwise it will transport them to the doing of undue and irregular things. Moses, one of the wisest and best of men, and most likely to govern and manage his zeal as he ought, and to keep aloof from all excess and extravagance, being the meekest man upon earth, yet he was so surprized, upon a sudden occasion, that in a fit of zeal, he let fall the two tables of the law, which he had but just received from God, and dashed them in pieces. A true emblem of an ungoverned zeal, in the transport whereof even good men are apt to forget the laws of God, and let them fall out of their hands, and to break all the obligations of natural and moral duties.

2. From hence we plainly see, that men may do the worst and wickedest things out of a zeal for God and religion. Thus it was among the Jews, who engrossed salvation to themselves, and denied the possibility of it to all the world besides; and the church of Rome have taken copy by them, as in an arrogant conceit of themselves, so in the blindness, and fury, and uncharitableness of their zeal towards all, who refuse to submit to their authority and directions.

And as the teachers and rulers of the jewish church did of old, so doth the church of Rome now; they take away the key of knowledge from the people, and will neither into the kingdom of heaven themselves, nor suffer those that would, to enter in. They brand for heretics those who make the holy scrip-

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tures the rule of their faith, and worship; as St. Paul tells us the Jews did in his time, Acts xxiv. 14, "After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law, and the prophets." They establish the merit of their own righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God, by the faith of JESUS CHRIST. So St. Paul tells us the Jews did, in the verse immediately after the text; "for they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." And as the Jews anathematized and excommunicated the first Christians, and persecuted them to the death, as our SAVIOUR foretold, "that the time would come, when they should put them out of their synagogues, yea and kill them, thinking they did God good service;" so the church of Rome hath, for many ages, used the sincere professors of the same religion, persecuting them, first with excommunication, and then with fire and faggot; and with all the violence and fury in the world endeavouring the utter extirpation and ruin of them, by bloody croisado's and a barbarous inquisition, by treacherous massacres, and all sorts of hellish plots and machinations; witness the monstrous design of this day, never to be remembred or mentioned without horror, to have destroyed at one blow, and have swallowed up in one common ruin, our king, and prince, and nobles, and the representative body of the whole nation; witness the bloody massacre of Ireland, and all their wicked designs and practices, continued to this very day.

3. And lastly, that zeal for God and religion, does not alter the nature of actions done upon that

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account. Persecution and murder of the sincere professors of religion, are damnable sins; and no zeal for God and religion can excuse them, or take away the guilt of them; zeal for God will justify no action that we do, unless there be discretion to justify our zeal.

There is nothing oftner misleads men, than a misguided zeal; it is an *ignis fatuus*, a false fire, which often leads men into bogs and precipices; it appears in the night, in dark and ignorant weak minds, and offers itself a guide to those who have lost their way; it is one of the most ungovernable passions of human nature, and therefore requires great knowledge and judgment to manage it, and keep it within bounds. It is like fire, a good servant, but a bad master; if it once get head, it consumes and devours all before it, and the great danger and mischief of it is, that it is most commonly found where it should not be, and possesses those most, who are least fit to govern it; and most frequently employed about what it should not be; and ten to one but it is either mistaken in the object, or in the measure and degree of it; and even when it is a virtue, it is a nice and dangerous one; for the wisest men are apt to mingle their own passions and interests with their zeal for God and religion. So that it is not enough that men are acted by a zeal for God, and so sincerely follow the dictates of their consciences; but they must be careful to inform their consciences, and not suffer themselves to be violently transported and hurried on by their own passions and prejudice, and by a blind and furious zeal without knowledge.

But what then? Would we have men not follow their own consciences, or act contrary to them? No;
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by no means : for though conscience be not our rule ; yet it is our immediate guide ; and he does ill, who does act against his conscience. But men must be careful how they settle their practical judgment of things, and conclude things to be lawful or unlawful, duties or sins, without reason and good ground.

God hath given us understandings, to try and examine things, and the light of his word to direct us in this trial ; and if we will judge rashly, and suffer ourselves to be hurried by prejudice or passion, the errors of our judgment become faults of our lives : for God expects from us that we should weigh and consider what we do ; and when he hath afforded us light enough to discern between good and evil, that we should carefully follow the direction of it ; that we should be suspicious of our selves, when our zeal carries us to do things that are furious and cruel, false and treacherous, and have a horrid appearance even to the light of nature ; we should question that zeal which is so contrary to christian goodness and meekness, to peace and charity, and which tends to “ confusion and every evil work.”

I will conclude all with that excellent passage of St. James, which will shew us how little regard is to be had to many mens pretences of zeal for religion, Jam. iii. 13. “ Who is a wise man, and ended with knowledge amongst you ? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter zeal and strife in your hearts ; glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above : but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where zeal and strife is ; there is confusion, and every evil work. But the wisdom which is
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“ from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle;
 “ and easy to be entreated ; full of mercy and good
 “ fruits ; without partiality, and without hypocrisy :
 “ and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of
 “ them that make peace.”

Preached
 on No-
 vember 5.
 1686.

S E R M O N LXXXIII.

The best men liable to the worst treat-
 ment, from mistaken zealots.

JOHN XVI. 2.

*They shall put you out of the synagogues : yea, the time
 cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he
 doth GOD service.*

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THESE words were spoken by our blessed
 SAVIOUR, when he was about to leave the
 world ; at the thoughts whereof, finding his disci-
 ples to be exceedingly troubled, he comforts them
 by the consideration of the great benefit and advan-
 tage which from thence would accrue to them ; he
 tells them that he was going to heaven to intercede
 for them, and to make way for their admission there ;
 and withal promiseth, that his Father would send the
 Holy Ghost, who should abundantly supply the want
 of his presence with them : but he tells them at the
 same time, that they should meet with very ill en-
 tertainment and usage from the world : but so had
 he, chap. xv. 18. “ If the world hate you, ye know
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“that it hated me, before it hated you;” and why should they expect to be better treated than he was?

ver. 20. “Remember the word that I said unto you, “the servant is not greater than the LORD; if they “have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.”

And at the beginning of this chapter he tells them, that he did on purpose forewarn them of these things, to prepare their minds beforehand, and to arm them against the worst that might happen, ver. 1. “These “things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not “be offended.” And then he declares more particularly, how far the rage and malice of men should proceed against them, and in what kind they should suffer: “they shall put you out of the synagogues: “yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you “will think that he doth God service.”

So that our SAVIOUR here foretels two sorts of persecution, which his disciples should be exercised withal, excommunication; “they shall put you out “of their synagogues:” and excision; “yea the “time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will “think that he doth God service.” And these perhaps were but several kinds and degrees of excommunication; for the clearer understanding whereof it will be requisite, briefly to explain the three degrees of excommunication among the Jews.

The first called Niddui, is that which our SAVIOUR here means, by “putting out of the synagogue;” and which he elsewhere expresth by ἀφορισμος, or separation. Luke vi. 22. “Blessed “are ye when men shall hate you, and when they “shall separate you from their company.” And the effect of this excommunication was to exclude men from the communion of the church and people of GOD, and from his service, which was a great disgrace;

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disgrace ; because, after this sentence, none of the Jews were to converse with them, but to look upon them as heathens and publicans.

The second degree of this censure was called Cherem ; which included the first, but extended farther, to the confiscation of goods into the sacred treasury, and devoting them to God ; after which there was no redemption of them. And of this we find express mention, Ezra x. 7, 8. where it is said, “ that “ they made proclamation throughout Judah and “ Jerusalem, unto all the children of the captivity, “ that they should gather themselves together unto “ Jerusalem ; and that whosoever would not come “ within three days, according to the counsels of “ the princes and elders, all his substance should be “ devoted, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.”

The third degree was Shammatha when the rebellious and contumacious person was anathematiz'd and devoted, and, as some conceive, according to the law (Lev. xxvii. 29.) was to be put to death ; though other very knowing men in the Jewish learning think it amounted to no more than a final sentence, whereby they were left to the judgment of God, by some remarkable judgment of his to be cut off from the congregation of Israel.

Of the first and last of these degrees of excommunication, our SAVIOUR seems here to speak ; but whether in both instances in the text, he alludes in the one to the lowest, and in the other to the highest degree of excommunication among the Jews, is not so certain. To the first he plainly does, when he says, “ they shall put you out of the synagogues : ” and then he adds, that they should proceed much higher against them, even to put them to death ;

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"the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth GOD service;" that is, they should not only think it lawful to kill them, but look upon it as a duty, as a high act of religion, as an acceptable piece of worship, and "a sacrifice well-pleasing to GOD." For so indeed the word does not only import, but most properly signify, "who-soever killeth you shall think, λατρείαν προσφέρειν τῷ Θεῷ, that he offers a sacrifice to GOD;" for so the word λατρεία is sometimes used for "a sacrifice;" but being joined with προσφέρειν seems necessarily to be determined to that sense.

From the words thus explained, I shall make these following observations, very proper for our consideration upon the occasion of this day.

1. That the best of men may be separated and excluded from the communion of those who may assume to themselves to be the true and the only true church; yea and suffer under the notion of very bad and criminal persons. This our SAVIOUR here foretold of his apostles, some of the best men that ever lived: "they shall put you out of the synagogues."

2. That they who are thus excommunicated, by the pretended true church, may nevertheless be real members of the true church of CHRIST. Though the apostles were thus dealt withal by the jewish church: they did not cease for all that to be members of the true church of GOD.

3. That from uncharitable censures men do easily and almost naturally proceed to cruel actions. After they had put the disciples of our LORD "out of their synagogues," and thereby concluded them to be hereticks and reprobates, they presently proceed to kill them, as not worthy to live. "They shall put you out of their synagogues;" and when

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they have done that, they will soon after think it a thing not only fit, but pious and meritorious, to put you to death; "the time will come, that they will think it a good service to God to kill you."

4. That men may do the vilest things, and the most wicked, not only under a grave pretence of religion, but out of a real opinion and persuasion that they do religiously. Murder is certainly one of the greatest and most crying sins; and yet our SAVIOUR foretels, that the Jews should put his disciples to death, being verily persuaded that in so doing they offered a most acceptable sacrifice to God: "Yea the time shall come, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offers a sacrifice to God."

5. That such actions are nevertheless horribly impious and wicked, notwithstanding the good mind with which, and the good end for which they are done. The Jews were not excused from the guilt of persecution and murder, for all they thought they did well in killing the disciples of our LORD.

6. I observe that the corruption of the best things is the worst. Religion is the highest accomplishment and perfection of human nature; and zeal for God and his truth an excellent quality, and highly acceptable to God: and yet nothing is more barbarous, and spurs men on to more horrible impieties, than a blind zeal for God, and false and mistaken principles in the matter of religion; as is plain from the instances here before us in the text. I shall speak as briefly as I can to these observations.

1. That the best of men may be separated and excluded from the communion of those, who may assume to be the true and only true church, and that, under the notion of very bad and criminal persons. This our SAVIOUR foretels in the text should be the

the fate of his apostles, some of the best and holiest persons that ever lived; "they shall put you out of the synagogues." SERM.
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And what the Jews did in the beginning of christianity, to the apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR, hath been too frequently practised since, by some of the professors of christianity towards one another; and very good men have in several ages fallen under the censure of excommunication, and have been separated from the external communion of the church, and branded with the odious names of hereticks and apostates, by those who have arrogated to themselves to be the only orthodox and true church, and have gotten the external power and management of religion into their hands; witness the case of Athanasius and others, in the reign and prevalency of Arianism; and the ill treatment, that not only particular persons, eminent for their learning and piety, but whole churches have met with in this kind, from that haughty and uncharitable church, which makes nothing of thundring out this most fearful sentence of excommunication, against persons, and churches much better and more christian than herself, and against all that will not submit to her pretended infallibility, and usurped authority over the souls and consciences of men.

But it is our great comfort, that the apostles and disciples of our LORD and master were thus used, by a church that made the same pretences that they do, and upon grounds every whit as plausible, as I could clearly shew, if I were minded to pursue and make out this comparison.

2. They who are thus excommunicated, by the only pretended true church, may nevertheless be true members of the church of CHRIST. Though

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the apostles were thus dealt withal by the jewish church, they did not cease for all this to be real members of the true church of God. For it is not calling hereticks first, that proves them that do so to be no hereticks, or acquits them from the same or greater crimes, than those which they are so forward to charge upon other men; nor will God condemn all those who are excommunicated by men, and deny salvation, to every one whom they shall please to separate from their society, and to call by some odious name. Men may be put out of the synagogue, and yet received into heaven: for the judgment of God is not according to the uncharitable censures of men; but according to truth and right.

The sentence of excommunication is certainly very dreadful where it is duly inflicted; and next to the judgment of God, men ought to be afraid of justly incurring the danger of this censure; and it ought to be upon very plain and evident grounds that men either separate themselves, or endanger their being cut off from the communion of the church they live in: but when it once come to this, that a church is infected with gross errors and corruptions, plainly contrary to the word of God, especially if that church will impose her errors upon all that are of her communion; then those who refuse to comply, do not separate themselves, but are cut off; do not depart, but are driven out of the communion of that church; and separation in that case is as innocent and free from the guilt of schism, as the cause of it is; for the terms of communion are become such, that those who are convinced of those errors and corruptions can have no salvation, if they continue in that communion, and then I am sure
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their salvation will not be endangered by leaving it, or being excommunicated out of it; for that would be the hardest case in the world, that men should be damned for continuing in the communion of such a church, and damned likewise for being cast out of it.

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Therefore no man ought to be terrified, because of the boldness and presumption of those, who with so much confidence, and so little charity, damn all that are not of their communion; for we see plainly from the text, that men may be in the right and surest way to salvation, and yet be excommunicated by those who call themselves the true church, and will not allow salvation to any, but those of their own communion. The disciples of our LORD and SAVIOUR were certainly very good men, and in a safe way of salvation, though they were excommunicated, and put out of the synagogue, by the chief priests and the rulers of the jewish church. I proceed to the

3. Observation, which was this, that from uncharitable censures, men do by an easy step and almost naturally proceed to cruel actions. After the Jews had put the disciples of our LORD out of their synagogues, and thereby concluded them to be heretics and reprobates; no wonder they should proceed to kill those, whom they thought not worthy to live; "they shall put you out of their synagogues," (says our SAVIOUR) and when they have done that, they will soon think it a thing not only fit and reasonable, but pious and meritorious, and a good piece of service done to GOD, to put you to death. Uncharitableness naturally draws on cruelty, and hardens human nature towards those, of whom

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whom we have once conceived so ill an opinion, that they are enemies to God and his truth.

And this hath been the source of the most barbarous cruelties that have been in the world; witness the severity of the heathen persecution of the Christians, which justified itself by the uncharitable opinion which they had conceived of them, that they were despisers of religion and the gods, and consequently atheists; that they were pertinacious and obstinate in their opinions, that is, in the modern stile, they were hereticks. And the like uncharitable conceits among Christians hath been thought a sufficient ground (even in the judgment of the infallible chair) for the justification of several bloody massacres, and the cruel proceedings of the inquisition against persons suspected of heresy; for after men are once sentenced to eternal damnation, it seems a small thing to torment and destroy their bodies.

4. Men may do the vilest and most wicked things, not only under a grave pretence of religion, but out of a real opinion and persuasion of mind, that they do religiously. Murder is certainly one of the greatest and most crying sins; and yet our SAVIOUR foretels, that the Jews should put his disciples to death, being verily persuaded that in so doing they should offer a most acceptable sacrifice to God; "yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offers a sacrifice to God."

Not but that the great duties and virtues of religion are very plain and easy to be understood; and so are the contrary sins and vices: but then they are only plain to a teachable, and honest, and well-disposed mind; to those "who receive the word with meekness," and are not blinded with wrath

and furious zeal: to those that "receive the truth into an honest heart," and "entertain it in the love of it;" they are plain to the humble and meek; "for the humble God will guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his ways;" such as these God seldom suffers to fall into fatal mistakes about their sin, or duty, so as "to call good evil, and evil good; to call light darkness, and darkness light;" to think uncharitableness a virtue, and downright murder a great duty.

But if men will give up themselves to be swayed by self-love and self-conceit, to be governed by any base or corrupt interest, to be blinded by prejudice, and intoxicated by pride, to be transported and hurried away by violent and furious passions; no wonder if they mistake the nature, and confound the differences of things, in the plainest and most palpable cases; no wonder if "God give up" persons of such corrupt minds "to strong delusions, to believe lies." It ought not to be strange to us, if such men bring their understandings to their wills and interests, and bend their judgments to their prejudices, make them to stoop to their pride, and blindly to follow their passions, which way soever they lead them; for God usually leaves such persons to themselves, as run away from him, and is not concerned to secure those from splitting upon the most dangerous rocks, who will steer their course by no compass, but commit themselves to the wind and tide of their own lusts and passions.

In these cases men may take the wrong way; and yet believe themselves to be in the right: they may oppose the truth, and persecute the professors of it, and be guilty of the blackest crimes, and the most horrid impieties, malice and hatred, blasphemy and murder;

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murder; and yet all the while be verily persuaded, that they are serving God, and sacrificing to him.

Of this we have a plain and full instance in the scribes and pharisees, the chief priests and rulers among the Jews, who because "they sought the honour of men, and not that which was from God, and loved the praise of men, more than the praise of God;" because they were prejudiced against the meanness of our SAVIOUR's birth and condition, and had upon false grounds (though as they thought upon the infallibility of tradition, and of scripture interpreted by tradition) entertained quite other notions of the Messias, from what he really was to be; because they were proud and thought themselves too wise to learn of him; and because his doctrine of humility, and self-denial, did thwart their interest, and bring down their authority and credit among the people; therefore they set themselves against him with all their might, opposing his doctrine, and blasting his reputation, and persecuting him to the death; and all this while did bear up themselves with a conceit of the antiquity and privileges of their church, and their profound knowledge in the law of God, and a great external shew of piety and devotion, and an arrogant pretence and usurpation of being the only church and people of God in the world: and by virtue of these advantages, they thought they might do any thing; and that whosoever opposed the authority of so ancient and good a church, must needs be very bad men, and deserve to be proceeded against in the severest manner. As if any pretence of piety could give a privilege to do wickedly, and by how much the wiser and holier any man took himself to be, he might do so much the worse things.

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There is another remarkable instance of this in St. Paul, who out of a blind and furious zeal, for "the traditions of his fathers," persecuted the true church of God, by imprisonment or death, and all manner of cruelties; and all this while "he verily thought" that he was in the right, and "that he ought to do" all these "things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth." And if God had not in a miraculous manner check'd him in his course, and changed his mind, he would have spent his whole life in that course of persecution and cruelty, and would (with pope Paul the IV. upon his death-bed) have recommended the inquisition (or if he could have thought of any thing more severe) to the chief priests and rulers of the jewish church.

I will not trouble you with nearer instances; though the jewish church is not the only church in the world, that hath countenanced the destruction and extirpation of those who differ from them, as a piece of very acceptable service to God, and meritorious of the pardon of their sins.

5. I observe that such actions as these are nevertheless horribly wicked and impious, notwithstanding the good mind with which, and the good end for which they are done. The Jews were not excused from the guilt of persecution and murder, for all they thought they did well in killing the disciples of our LORD.

For to make an action good and acceptable to God, the goodness of all causes, and of all circumstances, must concur; and any one defect in any of these does vitiate the whole action, and spoil the goodness of it. We must do it with a good mind, being verily persuaded that what we do is good and acceptable to God; in which sense St. Paul saith,

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that "whatever is not of faith is sin;" and we must do it for a good end, for the honour of God, and the service of religion, and the benefit and edification of men. But there is one thing wanting yet, which is often forgotten, but is mainly considerable, viz. what we do with a good mind, and to a good end, must be good and lawful in itself, commanded or allowed, or at least not forbidden by God: if it be; what good circumstances soever may belong to the action, the whole action is stark naught; because the very matter and substance of it is evil, and unlawful, and damnable, though done for never so good an end. So St. Paul tells us, that they "who said they might do evil, that good might come, their damnation was just." He tells us indeed, that some would have charged this doctrine upon the Christians, and particularly upon himself; but he rejects it, with the greatest detestation; and (which is not unworthy of our observation) in his epistle to the Roman church; as if the Spirit of God, to whom all times are present, had particularly directed him to give this caution to that church, that in future ages they might be warned against so pernicious a principle, and all wicked practices that are consequent upon it.

And we find that St. Paul, after his conversion, did think it no sufficient plea and excuse for himself, and his persecution of the christian profession, that what he did was out of zeal for God and his true religion, as he was verily persuaded; but notwithstanding that, acknowledgeth himself a murderer, and "one of the greatest sinners;" for which, without "the great mercy of God," he had perished everlastingly.

6. And lastly, I observe that the corruption of the best things is the worst. Religion is certainly the highest accomplishment and perfection of human nature; and zeal for God and his truth an excellent quality, and highly acceptable to God: and yet nothing is more barbarous, and spurs men on to more horrid impieties, than a blind zeal for God, and false and mistaken principles in the matter of religion.

Our SAVIOUR compares the christian religion, and the ministers and professors of it, to salt and light, the most useful and delightful things in the world. Religion enlightens the minds of men, and directs them in the way wherein they should go; it seasons the spirits and manners of men, and preserves them from being putrified and corrupte: but if "the salt lose it's favour," if that which should season other things, be tainted itself; "it is thenceforth" the most insipid and offensive thing in the world, "good for nothing, but to be cast upon the dunghil: if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness?"

Mistakes and false principles are no where so pernicious, and of such mischievous consequence, as in religion. A blind and misguided zeal in religion is enough to spoil the best nature and disposition in the world. St. Paul (for ought appears) was of himself of a very kind and compassionate nature; and yet what a fury did his mistaken zeal make him! It is hardly credible how madly he laid about him, but that he himself gives us the account of it, Acts xxvi. 9, 10, 11. "I verily thought with myself, (says he) that I ought to do many things, contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; which thing I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests. And when they were put to death, I gave

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“ my voice against them ; and I punished them oft
 “ in every synagogue, and compell’d them to blas-
 “ pheme, and being exceedingly mad against them,
 “ I persecuted them even to strange cities.”

I might descend lower, and give instances both of former and latter times, of emperors and princes, both heathen and christian, that of themselves were mild and gentle ; and yet through a mistaken zeal, and the instigation of the chief priests, have been carried to cruel and bloody things. And indeed nothing gives so keen an edge, even to the mildest tempers, as an erroneous and wild zeal for God and religion ; it is like quicksilver in the back of a sword, that is not very sharp of itself, which gives a mighty force and weight to it’s blow, and makes it to cut terribly.

And it is very sad to consider, that the zealous prosecution of mistakes in religion hath produced sadder and more barbarous effects in the world, and more frequently, than the ordinary corruptions and degeneracy of natural light is apt to do ; as the decay of the richest and most generous wines makes the sourest vinegar ; so that the pasquil or libel against pope Urban the VIII. upon occasion of his taking off the brazen roof of the old capitol (which had held out so many ages, and that notwithstanding Rome had been so often sack’d by barbarous nations). and his selling it to enrich his family [*quod non fecerant Barbari, fecerunt Barberini*] may, with changing the name and occasion, be applied to a great many others ; that they have been guilty of those cruelties against Christians, upon account of difference in religion, which the most barbarous nations never exercised upon one another.

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I have done with the observations and the text; S E R M.
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and shall I now need to make any application of what hath been said, to the occasion of this day? The thing applies itself; since the horrid design of this day was undertaken and carried on upon the same pretences and principles, upon which the Jews persecuted the disciples of our LORD, and much in the same method; for the first thundered out an excommunication against them, and then took it for granted, that it would be “an acceptable sacrifice to God, to destroy them.”

I will not go about to aggravate the conspiracy of this day, it is past my skill; nor will I extend the blame and guilt of it any farther than the plain evidence and reason of the thing does enforce. It is a thing so scandalous to human nature, and so great a reflection upon any church and religion, to be accessory to the contriving or countenancing of any such design, that I am very well contented, that it should be confined to as narrow a compass as may be, and none esteemed guilty of it, but those that were openly in it, or have since endeavoured to excuse it. All that we desire of others, is, that they would declare their hearty detestation of such abominable practices, and be as good as their word; and that they would not account it a service and sacrifice to God, to destroy all that cannot be of their mind.

So that the inference from all this discourse, in short, shall be this, that men should take great care to inform their consciences aright, and to govern them by the plain rules of good and evil, the law of God written upon our hearts, and revealed in his word, which forbids such practices as I have been speaking of, as clearly as the sun shines at noon-day; and that we would always be afraid to do a
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bad thing, though gilded over with never so glorious colours, and specious pretences of zeal for God and his truth. For a man may do a thing with an honest mind, and for a religious end, and be commissioned and countenanced (as St. Paul was) by them who take themselves to be the only true church in the world; and yet at last prove to have been all the while a blasphemer, and a murderer, and the greatest of sinners; for none of these pretences are sufficient to warrant and sanctify a wicked action: before this can be done, the immutable nature of good and evil must be changed.

I will conclude all with that gentle reproof of our blessed SAVIOUR to his disciples, when their zeal for him had transported them to make that cruel request to him, that he would (as Elias had done upon a like occasion) “call for fire from heaven to
“destroy the Samaritans: Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of man came
“not to destroy mens lives, but to save them;” hereby declaring to us the true temper and spirit of christianity, and that they that act contrary to it are ignorant of the nature of the christian religion;
“ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for
“the Son of man came not to destroy men lives,
“but to save them.”

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S E R M O N LXXXIV.

The duty and reason of praying for
government

Preached
on the
29th of
May
1693.

I TIM. II. 1, 2.

I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.

I Need not tell any here, that this day is appointed by authority for an anniversary solemnity, in a grateful commemoration of the great mercy of God to these nations, in putting an end to the intestine wars and confusions of many years, in restoring to us our ancient government and laws, and in bringing home, as upon this day, the rightful heir of these kingdoms, to the crown and throne of his fathers: And though the glory of this day hath been not a little sullied and obscured by many things which have happened since that time, fitter now to be buried in silence and oblivion, than to be mention'd and raked up; yet it hath pleased God, in scattering those black clouds, which not long since hung over us, to restore this day to it's first lustre and brightness; so that we may now with great joy look back upon it, as designed by the wise providence of God, to make way for the happiness which we now enjoy under their present majesties, by whom,
under

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under God, we have been delivered from that terrible and imminent danger which threatned our religion and laws, and the very constitution itself of our ancient government. And to this occasion, no kind of argument can be more proper and suitable, than that which the Lord affords to our consideration, in this injunction of St. Paul to Timothy, to take care that in the publick worship of God, supplications and thanksgivings be put up to God, "for kings, and all that are in authority. I exhort therefore," &c.

In which words there are four things considerable.

First, The duty here enjoined, which is prayer; expressed to us in several words, which seem to denote the several kinds or parts of prayer; "I exhort therefore, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: For kings, and for all that are in authority, &c." Some of these words are of a very near signification; and yet there seems some difference betwixt them, most probably this:

1. By *δέησεις*, which we render supplications, is probably meant that part or kind of prayer, wherein we supplicate God for the pardon of our sins, and for the averting and removing of evils, whether temporal or spiritual, from our selves or others.

2. By *προσευχάς*, which we render prayers, seems to be meant petitions for blessings and good things from God; and these are most properly call'd prayers.

3. By *ἐντεύξεις*, seems to be particularly meant pleadings and intercessions on the behalf of others.

4. By *εὐχαριστίας*, is certainly intended praises and thanksgivings to God, for his blessings and goodness to our selves and others. This seems to be

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the difference between them, which whether it be exactly so or not, is not very material, since these are unquestionably the several kinds or parts of prayer.

All these several sorts of prayer, St. Chrysostom, in his comment upon this text, tells us were publickly used in his time, in the daily service of the church; "this (says he) all communions do know is done every day, morning and evening; how that we pray for all the world, for kings, and for all that are in authority.

Secondly, For whom we are to pray; in general, "for all men." Our prayers are one of the greatest and best expressions of our charity, and therefore ought to be as large and extensive as our charity is. We are bound in common charity to love all men, and to wish well to them; but our bare wishes signify nothing, unless we direct them to God, who is able to confer upon them the blessings and good things which we wish to them.

And this is a charity which God hath put into every man's power, and which the poorest man in the world, as well as the richest, is capable of exercising at all times and upon all occasions: For the "ear of God is open to the prayers" of the poor, as well as of the rich, and they are every whit as prevalent with him; nay, the scripture seems to say, that God hath a more particular regard to the prayers of the poor. So that we may be liberal and bountiful in our prayers to those, to whom we are able to give nothing else; and when our hands cannot reach to relieve them, we may pour out our hearts to God for them; we may pray for their spiritual and temporal good, and we may praise God for the good which befalls them, though it was out

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of our power to be any ways instrumental to procure it for them.

Thirdly, For whom we are more especially, and in the first place, to pray; viz. for those who have the greatest and most publick influence of all others, upon the peace and happiness of mankind, “for kings, and for all that are in authority;” that is, for the supreme magistrate, and for all inferior magistrates, who derive their power and authority from the supreme.

Government is necessary to the welfare of mankind; because it is the great band of human society, the guard of it's peace, and the security of every man's person and property; and therefore we are concerned as much as is possible, both to pray for our governors, and to bless God for them; because without them we should be in a most wretched condition. Mankind would be unavoidably miserable without government; human society would presently disband, and all things would run into confusion. It is a remarkable saying of one of the jewish masters, pray for the happiness of the kingdom or government; for if it were not for the fear of that, men would devour one another alive. And Josephus tells us, that when the Jews were made subject to the Romans (though it was by conquest) twice a day they offered up sacrifices for the life and safety of the emperor. And this was very agreeable to what God had commanded that people by his prophet, in a much like case, when the Jews were conquered by the king of Babylon, and carried away captives, Jer. xxix. 7. “Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.”

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And surely the reason is much stronger, why we should pray for our natural princes and governors. SERM.
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I come now to the

Fourth and last thing considered in the text, and which I principally design to speak to, namely, the reason or argument which the apostle uses, to engage us “to pray for our princes, and for all that are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.” The manifold benefits and advantages which redound to us from our governors, is a sufficient argument why we should pray to God for them, and praise him likewise for so great a blessing, and that in the first place; “I exhort therefore, first of all” (saith the apostle), &c. Now the apostle here in the text expresseth two great advantages of government, which upon the matter do comprehend all the rest.

1. That by government we are secured in our civil rights and interests, in the quiet and peaceable possession of what is our own.

2. That we may thereby be protected in the free practice and exercise of religion and virtue.

These are the two greatest and most desirable things to man; and neither of these can be had without government. I shall briefly consider these two particulars, and then endeavour to shew, what obligation the consideration of them lays upon us, both to pray to God in the behalf of our princes and governors, and likewise to praise God for them: And then I shall conclude all with a brief application of this whole discourse to the solemn occasion of this day.

First, I shall begin with the benefits and advantages of government mention’d in the text, namely, these two.

1. That by it we are secured in our civil rights and interests, in the quiet and peaceable possession of what is our own.

Without government there could be no such thing as property in any thing beyond our own persons; for nothing but laws can make property, and laws are the effect of government and authority: Nay, without government, we have no security of our persons and lives, much less of any thing that belongs to us, and is at present in our possession. Were we not protected by laws (which are the effect of government) we could have no safety, no quiet enjoyment of any thing; but every man must be perpetually upon his guard against all the world, and exposed to continual violence and injuries from those, who are too many, and too strong for him; so that all our quiet and security from fear and danger, from the fraud and oppression of those who are more crafty and powerful than our selves, from endless confusions and distractions, and from a state of perpetual feud and war with all mankind, is entirely due and owing to civil government.

And this alone is so unspeakable a benefit, that without it, men, of all creatures, would be the most miserable; because all that wit and sagacity, all that cunning and contrivance, which mankind hath above the brute creatures would but enable them to do so much the more mischief to one another, and to devise and find out more powerful and effectual means and instruments to harm and destroy one another.

In short, that we live, and that we live well, in any tolerable condition either of safety or plenty, and that we are able to call any thing our own for one day, or for one hour; that we are not in perpetual terror and apprehension of mortal dangers, and that

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we are at any time free from the invasion of what we at present possess, by the fraud and force of others, is solely the effect of this great blessing, and divine appointment of government, to preserve the peace of human society, and by wise and wholesom laws, to tie up mens hands from mutual injuries and violence. Upon this all the comfort and all the security of human laws do depend. From hence it comes to pass, (that as the scripture expresseth it) " We may sit down every man under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree, and that there shall be none to make us afraid." So that if security is necessary to the comfort and happiness of mankind; then government is so too: For without this, the societies of men would presently dissolve and fall in pieces, and all things would run into confusion and disorder.

2. Another great benefit which may reasonably be expected from government (though it does not always so happen) is, that men are protected by it, in the free exercise and practice of religion and virtue. Therefore we should " pray for kings, and for all that are in authority, (says the apostle) that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty;" that is, in the practice of piety and devotion towards God; of sobriety and temperance in regard to our selves: and of justice and charity toward all men.

It is true indeed, (and so the apostles and first Christians found it by experience) that the edge and authority of laws may be, and sometimes is turned upon the true religion, and the sincere professors of it: But even then, though good men may receive great harms and injuries from persecuting princes and governors; (as the primitive Christians did from several of the Roman emperors) yet then it so happens,

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penis, that good men have some considerable benefit and protection from the civil government and laws, being for the most part preserved from the fury and rage of the multitude; so that though particular persons undergo the trial of cruel sufferings, yet much greater numbers do escape and are preserved.

And which is very considerable in this matter, against several of the main and essential parts of religion, there never was any human law made; as against inward love, honour, and reverence of Almighty God, and the worshipping him in our hearts, and in secret; of this part of religion, human laws can take no cognizance: Nay, farther yet, against humility and meekness, against modesty, and patience, against temperance and chastity, against peaceableness and obedience to government, against justice and gratitude, against charity and forgiveness of injuries, against these and such like virtues, the apostle has told us, there is no law. Against the practice of these (without some of which government could not possibly subsist) no persecution was ever raised, no not by the worst of governors: On the contrary, in the practice of these virtues, good men have been in all ages and times protected by law.

'Tis true indeed, that good men have many times been grievously persecuted by the civil government and authority, for the external profession of revealed religion; which was the case of the Christians at that time, when the apostle commanded them "to pray for kings, and for all that were in authority;" that under their protection, "they might lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty." St. Paul knew very well, when he gave this injunction to them, "that supplications and prayers be made for kings, and for all that are in authority," that

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the powers of the world did not at that time favour christianity : But he knew likewise, that government was necessary to the happiness of mankind, and that Christians, even in the state of persecution, did enjoy many considerable benefits and advantages by it, so that they were not perpetually exposed to popular rage and cruelty, and the violence of wicked and unreasonable men ; which would not only have hindered the progress of christianity, but would in a short time have endangered the extinguishing of it : Besides that by the favour and protection of government, the Christians had many considerable intervals of peace and ease, which gave christianity a breathing time, and opportunity to recover itself ; and though the secular authority did for a long time discountenance christianity, and keep it under hatches ; that was but an accidental effect and abuse of government, and obedience was still due, and prayers for it, so much the more necessary, yea and thanksgivings to God for it very reasonable, upon account of the common benefits and advantages of it to human society.

Besides that Christians did hope and believe, that the civil government might in time be gained, to give it's countenance and assistance to christianity, and that " kings and princes might become nursing fathers to the church," as was expressly foretold by the prophets, and afterwards in God's due time was remarkably accomplished. In the mean time Christians were patiently to obey and suffer in expectation of those glorious rewards in another world, which were promised to their faith and patience ; and to pray for the powers that persecuted them, that " they also might be brought to the acknowledgment of the truth," and might use that power which God had committed to them, for the protection of truth and
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innocency, and for the continuance and support of the true religion; which, blessed be God, was afterwards the case of christianity, for several ages. I proceed in the

Second place, to shew what obligation the consideration of the mighty benefits and advantages of government lays upon us, both to pray to God on the behalf of princes and governors, and likewise to praise God for them.

Because in their welfare and prosperity the publick peace and happiness doth chiefly consist, and in the publick good consists the good of particular persons; and above all, the piety and goodness of princes and magistrates (especially those who are in the highest place of authority) have a general good influence upon the manners of men, both for the discountenancing of wickedness and vice, and for the encouragement of religion and virtue, which are the main pillars and foundation of publick peace and prosperity. "A king sitting in the throne of judgment, (saith Solomon, Prov. 20. 8.) "scattereth away all evil with his "eyes." The pattern of a religious and good prince is a living law to his subjects, and more than the example of ten thousand others, to mould and fashion the manners of the people to a conformity to it.

Besides that there is (as one expresth) a kind of moral connexion and communication of evil and of guilt betwixt princes and people, so that they are many times mutually rewarded for the virtues and good actions, and punished for the sins and faults of one another. Of which proceedings of the divine justice towards the people of Israel, there are many remarkable instances in scripture, where God rewarded the piety of good princes, with great blessings upon their people, and punished the personal faults of their

their kings with publick judgments upon the whole nation. So that in truth, it is the greatest kindness and charity to our selves, to pray for our princes and governors; because our welfare is involved in theirs, and we suffer not only in all the misfortunes and calamities which befall them, but many times upon account of their personal faults and miscarriages. *Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi*, the extravagances of princes are punished in the misfortunes of their subjects. Thus David, (otherwise a very good king), sinned in numbring the people, and the plague fell upon them; he was punished in the calamity of his people. And this was in no wise unjust, because there are always sins enough in any nation to deserve punishment, and God may take what occasion he pleases, to send his judgments upon them that deserve them; for princes and people make but one civil and political body, and what part of it soever is punished, the other suffers. And this is the true ground and reason of the communication of punishments betwixt princes and people.

Another consideration which should engage us "to pray for those that are in authority," is, that we reap the great benefit of their care, and pains, and vigilancy for us, "under their shadow we are safe." Our innocency and our rights are protected by their power and laws, and by the just punishments which they inflict upon evil-doers, and upon those who go about to violate our rights in any kind; so that we ought to pray and to praise God for them, as our great benefactors, and the chief instruments of our security and welfare; and therefore not only in duty, but in justice and gratitude, we are bound to wish all good to them, and to intercede with God for them,

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for the peace and prosperity of their government, and to bless God on their behalf: yea, we ought to do this out of love to our selves; because their good and prosperity is ours, their goodness and righteousness, their personal piety and virtues extend to us, and have a mighty influence upon us, to excite and encourage us to follow their good example, and "to go and do likewise."

And we ought likewise to do this out of charity and compassion to our princes and governors, whose condition is in truth rather to be pitied than envied, and whose high place and dignity is much more to be dreaded than desired by a wise man, considering how heavy a burden they sustain, what dangers they are continually exposed to, what cares and troubles and censures they daily undergo, for our safety and ease. So that whatever ambitious and inconsiderate men may think, wise men do certainly know and find by experience, that to discharge with care and faithfulness all the parts of a good governor, is a very difficult and troublesom province. Inferior magistrates find care and trouble enough, in that small share and part of it which they sustain; and if so, then certainly the care and concernment of the whole, must needs be a heavy burden indeed; and what abilities are sufficient for it, what shoulders are strong enough to stand under it?

And as upon this account they have the greatest need of our prayers, for God's direction and assistance in the discharge of their high office, so likewise for his powerful grace to preserve them from sin and evil, in the midst of those manifold temptations to which they are continually exposed, in appearance much beyond other men, from the height of their condition, and the extent of their power, which are
strong

strong temptations to weak minds, to pride and insolency, to injustice and oppression; from the abundance of all things, which minister to luxury and excess; and from the officious servility of parasites and flatterers, who sooth them in their faults, and humour them in their passions, and comply with their corrupt and vicious inclinations, and are always ready at hand, and forward instruments to execute their commands, and to serve their lusts and vices.

And as princes greatly need our prayers upon these accounts; so it is just matter of praise and thankfulness to God, when a nation hath wise, just, and good princes, who lay to heart the interests of their people, and endeavour by all the wise methods and honest arts of government, effectually to procure it; who by their authority and due execution of the law, do discountenance, and, as much as in them lies, restrain wickedness and vice; and by their own example encourage virtue and piety in their subjects; and thereby invite, and even provoke them to the like practices: the life of a good prince is a kind of publick censure of ill manners, and reproof of wicked practices. And I do not know whether there be a more delightful sight on this side heaven, than to see those who are in eminent place and power, even if they might do whatever they would, yet continually chusing to do what they ought; as if their power were so far from being a temptation to them to do evil, that on the contrary, the consideration of it is one of the best and strongest arguments to restrain them from it.

Weak minds are apt to measure their liberty by their power, and to think that the higher and greater they are, so much the greater privilege they have to be more extravagantly bad than others: but if the

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matter be really considered, the argument runs the other way; and he that reasons wisely, will certainly conclude with Tully, *in maximâ quâque fortunâ minimum licere*, that they who are in the highest station, and greatest power, have of all others the least liberty to do what they list. Their power, supposing it never so uncontrollable and unaccountable, would be so far from being in reason a temptation to them to do what they ought not, that in truth it would set them above the temptation of doing an ill thing; because they would stand in awe of no body, and there would be nothing that could hinder them from doing what is best, if they had a mind to it: and every one ought to have such a mind: and nothing can be more mis-becoming, and more directly contrary to the nature of their office, and the power wherewith they are intrusted, than to give an example of breaking those laws, which they are to put in execution.

God himself, because he hath all power, is therefore all goodness, and is therefore “holy in all his ways, and righteous in all his works;” according to the reasoning of the author of the book of wisdom, who argues thus with God, it is not (says he) agreeable with thy power to condemn him that hath not deserved to be punished; that is, it is not agreeable with infinite power, to do any thing that is unjust; for thy power (saith he to God), is the beginning of righteousness, and because thou art the Lord of all, it maketh thee to be gracious unto all. Infinite power is the foundation and principle of goodness and righteousness, and an all-powerful being is good and righteous, not only from choice, but from a necessity of nature.

And

And this is the true ground and reason of that saying of St. James, that "God cannot be tempted with evil," because his infinite power sets him above all temptation to it: for what reason can be imagined, why he that hath all power, shall have any inclination to be otherwise than good? What can tempt him thereto? Since he that hath all power can neither have any hopes of being greater than he is, nor any fear of becoming less: and all temptation is founded either in hope or fear, and where neither of these can have any place, there can be no occasion, no possible motive or temptation to evil; for to be evil, and to do evil, is always an effect of weakness and want of power.

The sum of what I have said upon this argument, and the design indeed of it, is to shew, that the greater power and authority any one hath, the less liberty he hath to do any thing that is bad. And I have been the larger upon this, because I would fain imprint upon the minds of persons, whom the providence of God hath invested with great power and authority, that as they have great opportunities of doing more good than others, so they have greater reason, and more advantages of doing it, and are more inexcusable if they do any thing that is bad; not only because their actions are of a more publick influence and observation; but because their temptations to evil, how great soever they may seem to be, are in truth and reality much less than other mens. Happy are those princes, that wisely consider this, and make their power and authority over others, an argument to be so much better themselves, and to do so much more good to others; and because they are less subject to the coercive power of law, do for that reason think themselves so much the more obliged

liged to be a law to themselves. Blessed be God for the happiness which we enjoy in this respect; and let us earnestly beseech him that he would be pleased to bestow such a plentiful measure of his grace and holy Spirit on our most gracious king and queen, as may effectually both engage and enable them to use their power to the best purposes for the publick good.

And thus I have briefly gone over, and explained to you the several particulars in the text; the duty of prayer here enjoined; for whom we are to pray, in general “for all men;” and for whom more especially, and in the first place; “for kings, and all that “are in authority;” and upon what considerations we are to pray for them, and to praise God in their behalf; because of the great benefits we receive by them; and because both in respect of the dangers and difficulties of their condition, they stand in need of our prayers above other men; besides that in praying for their welfare and prosperity, we pray for our own peace and happiness.

And now to apply this to our selves, and to the occasion of this day. By all that hath been said, we cannot but be convinced what cause we have to bless God for that happy government which we live under, that excellent constitution, under the gentle influences whereof we enjoy more liberty, more plenty, and more security from all manner of injury and oppression, than any nation this day on the face of the earth. Therefore with what thankfulness should we this day commemorate the happy restoration of this government to us, after the miserable distractions and confusions of twenty years, by the restoration and return of our banished sovereign, in so peaceable, and yet so wonderful a manner, that a remem-

brance of it, even at this distance, is almost still
matter of amazement to us!

“Blessed be the LORD GOD of Israel, who alone
“doth wondrous things.”

And with our joyful praises, let us join our most
devout and fervent prayers to Almighty GOD, for
the king's and queen's majesties, “and for all that
“are in authority.” And I may truly say, that
there was hardly ever greater reason and occasion for
it, from both our distractions at home, and our
dangers from abroad; never was there greater need
of our earnest supplications and prayers, than at this
time, when our armies and fleets are in motion, and
when GOD seems already to have given us some
earnest of good success; blessed be his great and
glorious name.

We have indeed a great army, and a more
powerful fleet, than ever this nation sent forth; but
unless GOD be on our side, and favour our cause,
in vain are all our preparations; for whenever his
providence is pleased to interpose, by strength shall
no man prevail. Have we not reason then to cry
mightily unto GOD, when the only strength of the
nation is at stake, when our sins and provocations
are so many and great, and there lyes so heavy a
load of guilt upon us? When the person of his sa-
cred majesty is exposed to so much hazard, not on-
ly in the high places of the field, but from the rest-
less attempts of the malicious and implacable ene-
mies of our peace and religion, that he would be
graciously pleased to go forth with our armies and
fleets, and not remember our iniquities against us,
but save us for his mercies sake?

We are too apt to murmur and complain of mis-
carriages, and the ill management of affairs; but
surely

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surely the best thing we can do, and that which best becomes us, is to look forward, and to turn our censures of our governors and their actions, into humble supplications to GOD in their behalf, and in behalf of the whole nation; “that he would be
“pleased to turn us every one from the evil of our
“ways, that he may return to us, and have mercy
“on us, that so iniquity may not be our ruin; that
“he may rejoice over us to do us good, and may
“at last think thoughts of peace towards us,
“thoughts of good and not of evil, to give us an
“expected end of our troubles.”

Let us then betake our selves to the proper work of this day, hearty prayers and thanksgivings to Almighty GOD, for the king and queen, “and for all
“that are in authority;” that as he hath been pleased by a wonderful providence, to rescue us from the imminent danger we were in, and from all our fears, by the happy advancement of their majesties to the throne of these kingdoms; so he would of his infinite goodness still preserve and continue to us this light of our eyes, and breath of our nostrils, princes of that great clemency and goodness, which render them the true representatives of GOD upon earth, and the most gracious governors of men.

And let us earnestly beseech him, “that he
“would confirm and strengthen them in all goodness, and make them wise as angels of GOD, to
“discern betwixt good and evil, that they may
“know how to go in and out before this great
“people; that he would give them the united affections of their people, and a heart to study
“and seek their good all the days of their lives.

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And finally, that he would be pleased to continue so great a blessing to us, and to grant them a long and prosperous reign over us; and that their posterity in this royal family may endure for ever, and their throne as the days of heaven; that under them the people of these nations, we and the generations to come, may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty; for his mercies sake in JESUS CHRIST, who is King of kings, and Lord of lords; to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour, glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen.



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